# IMPORTANCE OF VALUES WITHIN THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC)

A literature review submitted as a requirement to obtain the degree of Professional in Modern Languages

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Code: 18245

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MODERN LANGUAGES BOGOTA, COLOMBIA January, 2016

#### **ABSTRACT**

This document analyses and studies the relation between the importance of ethical values and the application of them, by referring to them as essential elements into the cultural diversity, and also taking into account that within intercultural communicative competence exist several skills. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to show how values affects the cultural exchange in different sociocultural issues. It is relevant to mention some basics concepts as a culture, interculturality and stereotypes to make sense through the whole text. The main topic and the related ideas will be based on referenced studies from several authors to support the bigger concepts and link the theories to those concepts, then showing the importance to introduce, manage and apply the values through interculturality.

Key words: Culture, interculturality, stereotypes, ethics values.

#### RESUMEN

Este documento analiza y estudia la relación entre la importancia que tienen los valores éticos y la aplicación de estos, refiriéndose a ellos como elementos primordiales dentro de la diversidad cultural, también teniendo en cuenta que dentro de la competencia comunicativa intercultural existen varias habilidades. Por lo tanto el objetivo de este trabajo es dar a conocer cómo estos valores afectan el intercambio cultural en diferentes niveles socioculturales. Para mostrar una concordancia a lo largo del documento, es relevante mencionar algunos conceptos básicos como: cultura, interculturalidad y estereotipos. Todos los conceptos principales e ideas relacionadas, estarán basadas en estudios referenciados y de esta manera respaldar los grandes conceptos y teorías ligadas y por último, dar a conocer la importancia de introducir, gestionar y aplicar los valores en la interculturality.

Palabras claves: Cultura, interculturalidad, estereotipos, valores éticos.

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# INTRODUCTION

The human being, since his existence, has acquired inherent behaviors to his consciousness, taking him to build coexistence rules in order to guide the individual to develop himself according the environment in which he is located. So, the following document, explores the definitions, the history and the evolution of term of culture. Secondly, it is going to study the variety of cultures within the communities and the evolution in some social aspects such as: educative, economic and communicative. In third place, it will contextualize about what stereotypes are, then what is the origin of stereotypes and to propose a possible solution to eliminate negative stereotypes. In the fourth stage, the text will analyze the importance of values its definitions and the relation between values and interculturality. Finally the conclusions will be exposed at the end of the analysis.

# STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The word values comes from the Latin word *valere* which means, strength or health. The values are qualities that are worldwide, being indispensable for people as a starting point to decide between good and evil. Besides they always have been part of the society even do when human beings do not notice them, they are also a necessity for full coexistence, in which the individual seeks to have a positive impact in the society, prioritizing the common welfare over the particular; in order to setting up interactions terms so that there, in a cultural exchange could be harmony. Additionally, values are consolidated as an instrument so that the individual can be adapt to others cultures without imposing his own culture.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some instruments were recognized as social norms that are nowadays known as a values that has become a precedent for the constitution of modern society. The industrialization establishes the beginning of modern age that brought with itself the globalization, allowing the evolution of behavior and the interaction that has had the values in different cultures. The importance that values are a fundamental elements that mold the behavior of individual at the moment to interact in different cultures, guarantying the full knowledge of this and reducing the possibility to create stereotypes and prejudices.

Taking into account the premises exposed previously, the main purpose of this study is showing the importance and role that values have within interculturality and also answering, how do values affect the cultural exchange in different sociocultural issues?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

# **Culture Concepts**

Along history, have been present some aspects that have been fundamental part of the development of a society, that is why, the first main concept to define is culture. In its most general definition, culture is the set of artistic expressions that either personal or collective develops around disciplines such as painting, music, literature, dance, theatre and folklore; i.e. all the artistic expressions of a community, social group or nation that through the time they have acquired and transmitted. As the concept given by, Hernandez (2008): "The culture is something that is learned, shared and communicates" (p. 20). This means that culture is an element that has evolved according to the traditions of a social group.

Culture can be defined as human creation (Freire, 1970). It is the human part of the environment (Wang, Brislin, Wang, Williams, & Chao, 2000). This is why, culture is the non-biological aspects of life. It is the process of generating and sharing meaning within a social system. This social system is comprised of values, norms and ways of behaving and so culture comprises the ways to interact, behave, and communicate with one another.

The evolution of the concept has had five stages. The first stage "opposition culture/nature" originated in antiquity and ends in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main characteristic of this stage is the creation of culture as opposed to natural life forms or as they were called in the ancient Greece and the Roman Empire the Barbarism, i.e. that the "culture" was part of civilizations and the barbarians were those organizations that did not have a social institutes and who were on the outside of the law. It therefore relies on culture of a part of civilization and nature as part of society without rules. The second stage "opposition between culture/society" starts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; with the creation of the social science, culture allowed to explain, understand different social groups and approve the various lifestyle existing, anthropologically culture was basically associated with the arts, religion and customs of a social group. The third phase is given in the years 70's for the first time links the culture as an essential part of the development of societies. In fourth stage, the years 80's and next to the cultural expansion due to globalization, the economy framed cultural relations. And finally the fifth stage, which places culture depending on social

cohesion, which means, the value that can be added to intercultural relations, allowing the creation and development of new mechanisms for citizen participation. (Hernandez, 2008, p. 16). It is important to mention the history of culture owing to the evolution of society had taken the becoming of the term in what currently is knowing as a culture.

Additionally declared by the UNESCO (1982), as part of its role in the maintenance of peace and security in the world through education, science, culture and communication:

The culture can now be considered as the set of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. They include, in addition to arts and letters, modes of life, the fundamental rights to human beings, systems of values, traditions and beliefs; and culture gives man the ability to reflect upon itself. Is it that makes us beings specifically human, rational, critical and ethically committed. Through it, we discern values and make choices. Through the human being is expressed, becomes aware of itself, is recognized as an unfinished project, puts into question their own realizations, looks for tirelessly new meanings, and creates works that transcend it (para, 2). In other words, culture puts together several elements to be essential part of a specific community, allowing that those elements can be transmitted along the time.

Besides it is important to say that cultural diversity is a driving force of development, not only in terms of economic growth, but as a means of having a more enriching intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life. This diversity is an indispensable component for reducing poverty and achieving the goal of sustainable development, thanks, among others, to the regulatory device, develop in the cultural field.

Therefore, culture is a factor of a social cohesion, whose intrinsic value is in the development and maintenance of peace. For this reason, countries/communities, are committed to the protection of cultural diversity since it contributes to the consolidation of the nation as an important part in the social and economic expansion of countries. Culture plays an important role because it has influenced some of the conflicts evidenced in certain countries and this is due in large part to the cultural diversity that exists currently, presenting global repercussions that have remained over time. In this way, the recognition of cultural diversity through organizations as UNESCO and the Organization of the United Nations and also through the use of innovative media and ITC in particular, affirms that: "It

takes to the dialogue among civilizations and cultures, respect and mutual understanding" (Cultural Diversity, 2015, para. 4).

Culture diversity, which is part of composition of States and Nations, diversifies the vision of the world in reference to the existence of a single cultural identity throughout the world they are different shapes of cultures that exist, because of this and partly due to globalization from the centuries  $20^{th}$  and  $21^{st}$ , cultures are considered global and are part of what we now call the global society.

Thus, the concept evolves and conforms to the term of globalization, based on this culture is:

Culture is something alive, both composed of inherited elements from the past and adopted outside influences and innovations invented locally. Culture has social functions. One of them is provided an estimate of itself, an indispensable condition for any development either personal or collective (Molano and Ortiz, 2007, p. 72). This means that culture should be an essential instrument involved in the development of civilizations but culture also allows both individual and collective development.

# **Interculturality Concepts**

Other important concept which is immersed within ethical values is the interculturality but first, it is relevant to mention the meaning of ICC focused on four skills such as: grammatical competence; sociolinguistic competence; strategic competence and discourse competence. It is pertinent due to, cultural exchange that appears at the moment of learning a second language or when is obvious the interaction with a new society, as Martinez (2008) describes:

The communicative competence model emphasizes the importance of the four language skills since they are viewed as the manifestations of interpreting and producing a spoken or written piece of discourse which, is the core competence of the model. Thus, on the basis of this framework and taking the intercultural component as the point of departure, in what follows, a variety of activities in the four language skills are presented for teaching learners intercultural communicative competence (p. 161).

Also, the meaning of interculturality is attached to constant change over the different cultures that are the base of traditions and the continuous race for an identity,

which allows an invariable relationship between different beliefs. Apart from that, the importance of intercultural communicative competence is clearly evidenced in some context of the society, such as, education (teaching and learning), economy (linked to the consumer market and manifested in the so-called cultural industries) or communication (social relations, own rites and ceremonies, or the collective behavior). It is important to mention, the concept of interculturality is related with some perception that make a complement this definition, Ruiz (2014) explains the following:

Interculturality does not arise spontaneously but is part of a historical process in the stage of modernity, it is commonly associated with the sixteenth century with the European Renaissance to the present stage with capitalism late. Therefore, it is essential to refer to two concepts above that interculturality: tolerance and pluralism (p.23). In others words, the concept of interculturality since its beginning, has changed and evolved through the progression of civilizations, besides this, within the interculturality are present features such as tolerance and pluralism.

In the next section of the text, there will be a brief parenthesis to contextualize terms, tolerance and pluralism and thus deeply develop the idea given by Ruiz. Tolerance, for instance, is a value that belong to the good conduct and behavior of human beings, Gomez (2002) interpreted this as "The clearest expression of respect for others, besides being an essential value to peaceful coexistence between people. It means recognizing the others as human beings entitled to be accepted in their individuality and difference" (p.22). As a result, the person who is tolerant knows that is someone else belongs to a different race from yours or from another country, another culture, another social class or thinks differently to he or she, does not make it his or her rival or enemy.

Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) argued that, the acquisition of intercultural competence is never complete and perfect, but to be a successful intercultural speaker and mediator does not require complete and perfect competence (p. 11). This means that when someone is trying to produce the speech act, always it is going to be present some communicative conflicts but likewise, the communicative competence, allows to get an acceptable transfer of ideas.

The second aspect is the term of pluralism mentioned in theory by Ruiz that is related with democracy and is the response to the reality of the cultural diversity. That is

why pluralism can be understood as, "One ideology of model of social organization that claims the ability to live harmoniously in society groups or ethnic communities, religious or linguistically different." (Malguesini and Gimenez, 2000, p. 1). In that order, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the full development of creative capacities that sustain public life.

However, leaving aside the idea of pluralism, another point of view can be understood only by one specific area of society, where interculturality has an important role through the educational context, allowing an acceptable exchange, among the different levels of education. As a mention Trujillo (2012):

Interculturality is one of the key concepts in contemporary educational arena. This statement can be proved not only by its actual presence in schools, but in those forums where relevant educational topics are defined and discussed, namely specialized publications and scientific meetings (p. 103).

Another important fact of interculturality is the role of educators plays into this field, explaining that to have and effective communications, it is primordial the well knowing of different cultures to achieve a good teaching. As Gitimu (n.d) explains "a successful educators are effective communicators and thus culturally competent in crosscultural encounters. Teachers should therefore be sensitive to the potentially problematic outcomes of intercultural communication in the culturally diverse class" (p. 3).

In others words, it is evident that when exchange of ideas appears, it is inevitable that some communication conflicts occur but thanks to their communication skills, educators are able to manage problematic situations when interacting with people from different social levels or different types of cultures.

#### **Stereotypes Concepts**

On top of that, it is important to define the meaning of stereotypes due to beliefs and perceptions that exist. For instance the fact of thinking in a foreign people, one instance could be people from Japan, it is usually to consider them superiors in intelligence than any other person or that the most of Colombian people are drugs dealers. Despite of several of this statements could give an affirmation to those popular believes, it is important not generalizing due to when this happens appear stereotypes.

Depending on the cultural context in which a country or community belongs, stereotypes work to make a mental classification and in this way having a predisposition on how a person could be. According to Jost and Hamilton (2005), "Categorization is a fundamental process that gives rise to stereotyping and prejudice" (pag. 1). This means that the human being has always the constant mechanical thinking of classifying information and in some cases judge beliefs, ideas or concepts that all the time are not right.

Some concepts provided by Kurylo (2015) established that: "Stereotypes associate members of a group with one or more characteristics attributed to that group" (pag. 1), but by contrast Dyer (n.d) said: "The word stereotype is today almost always a term of abuse" (para. 1), due to just about all the time stereotypes do not exist or are a negative opinion owing to they are funded in prejudices. However, to avoid falling into the use of stereotypes, it is necessary, at the moment of meeting people, deal with them as whole "community" just like McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears (2002) explains: "Treating people as group members saves energy because it means that we can ignore all of the diverse and detailed information that is associated with individuals" (p. 4).

According to the article "Estereotipos y Formación Intercultural" (n.d.), which explains in a precise way another meaning of stereotype: "Is a misperception about someone based on minimally experienced signs" (p. 2). Therefore stereotypes are perceived, rightly, as a negative way of looking at people. This is even true for the positive stereotypes, based equally in a general heading for a whole set of people.

A possible result to eliminate the negative stereotypes is the contribution given by Ibañez, (2013) that establish:

In short, the contact with the other and cultural reality is essential to relativize what we thought unquestionable; immutable truths we had learned from our cultural tradition we become simple options between multiplicities. We need the other to leave our shell and culture understand that we are not the center of the world, but this is much broader and richer what our limited perspective makes us believe. (p. 5).

This means how important is the interaction with other cultures to avoid induced thoughts or ideas about people, also conveys the idea that it is necessary that cultures remain in continuous development and thus enriching their own knowledge of other

cultures. Stereotypes will always be present in the thinking of people, and they will always origin people have the wrong idea about other people and in some cases can generate serious conflicts.

# The Importance of Values on Intercultural Communicative Competence

Perhaps, the most distinctive feature within the interculturality are the values, which represents an essential elements that are imperative to mention due to they are involved, when one refers to several social classes or even on intercultural exchange. Regardless of what sort of cultural context a person belongs, values are one of the most important things because defines the interaction among people within a cultural system; one good example of this is the proposal by Schoeffel and Thompson (2007):

When one speaks of intercultural communication, one speaks inevitably of cultural values. Whether we are conscious of them or not, values are an important, generally invisible part of our culture. Values form the basis of all our attitudes and actions, and this brings us into harmony or conflict with the cultural values of groups in which we are members (p. 4).

Behavior is also characterized by the use of values in the internal communication of people, the interaction and the way they share the sociocultural knowledge, a clear example of this statement it can be evidenced through the contribution given by Schoeffer and Thompson (2007):

Values are also the lenses through which we view and evaluate the attitudes and actions of others. Values set the background criteria for how we should communicate appropriately with others. They also set the emotional tone for how we interpret and evaluate cultural stranger's behaviors. (p. 4). With this in mind it can be inferred that the values let you self-critical analysis, thus allowing appropriate behavior in a culture, so that the mode of action does not create any conflict.

Additionally, the intercultural communicative competence, shows a set of misunderstandings that are exposed when someone tries to transmit his or her beliefs, ideas or thoughts due to the cultural diversity, this is principally because exist a problematic during the speech action, that is why the previously connotation can be better interpreted as: "Problems of communication typically arise when persons from different social and cultural contexts fail to understand each other properly. It is difficult to secure successful

communication if the other person's beliefs about the world are extremely different from the speaker's beliefs". (Nordby, 2008, para. 1).

With this in mind, to illustrate the point of view proposed by Hofstede whose principal aim is to measure empirically the nature and strength of value differences among cultures, which means that exist grades to transmit the different levels of values, so, it is going to analyze four dimensions that he established in order to conceptualize how the cultures varies. He labelled this dimensions as: power-distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity.

The first dimension, Power-Distance (PD), is explained by the author, as the different levels of hierarchy among the members of the community, stimulating the power and status within a cultural system. The researcher also describes two different sort of cultural levels; high cultures on PD, are designed for develop rules, policies and instruments to build a good basis in the status relationship among the participants. On the other hand, low cultures are designed for avoid and eliminate different status levels, due to the rules or policies does not exist or are present in a minimum way (Hofstede, 1983, p. 160).

The second dimension is named, uncertainty avoidance (UA) that is described by the author as the way on how people handle anxiety at the moment to establish a momentary relationship with people from a different culture. Robinson (2004), gives a specific example of this:

When white British social workers communicate with a client from Pakistan, they are likely to be perceived as too non-confirming and unconventional by the client, and the social workers may view their client as rigid and overly controlled. Social and health workers need to have an understanding of the consequences of uncertainty avoidance for intercultural communication (p. 113).

The third dimension refers to individualism versus collectivism, that defines two different points of view but both are closely linked to explain the intercultural differences in behavior. For instance, individualism refers that it is not important the purposes of collectivity, eliminating them almost completely to be worried in personal aspirations and also having sense of autonomy and lack of concern for others; the individualism

predominates cultures as US and Britain. On the contrary, the collectivism is clary evident in societies as Asia and Africa and it refers that individual/personal targets are not a priority over the targets of a society and is always present, harmony and concern for other. But despite of both terms presents evident contrarieties, they also allow similarities as communication is concerned that can be analyzed through the evolution of cultures (Robinson, 2004, p. 114).

Masculinity is the last one dimension lent by author and explains how the values affects the relationship between the genres in a work environment. For example, in high cultures such as Japan, Austria and Italy, it evidenced the respect and the use of professional ethic between genres while in low cultures as Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, the differences between sexes are not evident (Hofstede, 1986, para. 19).

In this way, gathering all the concepts mentioned previously and the importance they present, it can say that the basis pillars for proper interaction between different cultures is the right appreciation and application of what currently is known as an ethical values, because allowing assimilate and accept the cultural conditions of a particular social group.

# **CONCLUSIONS**

As a conclusion, the perception of culture has endless of connotations due to the variety in some contexts such as religion, beliefs, traditions and all elements that are component in a social development of a community. In this context, the culture allowed to exist, distinctive features such as: spirituality, materialism and affection that characterize a society or social group. Culture also includes other distinctive features such as the arts and literature, the lifestyles, fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and thoughts

Is worth mentioning that, the interculturality offers a set of possibilities for whom, the main objective is to achieve a successful sociocultural exchange, regardless the thoughts, ideas or beliefs from others but at the same time not forgetting that interculturality can also be focused in another fields that contribute directly and indirectly to the individual and common "evolution". Also, interculturality provides the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and an attitude of mutual respect.

According to stereotypes, the analysis that could be reached, establish that construction of stereotypes and prejudice is closely linked to the processes of categorization, comparison and social identification. Additionally, it shows that society tends to fall into stereotypes and prejudice based on social and ethnic characteristics, even though the people are often not aware of it. With this in mind, also it is inferred a possible solution to avoid or better to eliminate the use of stereotypes which suggests acceptance and interaction between different cultures, having a previous knowledge of the culture and this way avoid judging others and to maintain a harmonious interaction among people from different cultural groups.

Finally all the ideas developed, lead to answer the big question that is under study and allowing to recognize that cultural exchange should always be under the influence of ethical values, due to it is based on public recognition of cultural rights within a community, forming part of the consolidation of the nation-state. This influence is necessary because it provides guidance on the conduct and decisions that define how to act

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in the different situations that arise in intercultural interaction. So, if anyone want to live in harmony it is necessary to build a scale where values are the main element to facilitate individual growth that would help facilitate the collective growth.

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