

Beyond High-Context and Low-Context Communication: Re-examining Hall's Framework Through Indo-German Intercultural Interaction

Abstract

Edward T. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication remains one of the most influential conceptual frameworks in intercultural communication. By demonstrating that cultures differ in the extent to which communicative meaning is conveyed through explicit linguistic expression or implicit contextual knowledge, Hall fundamentally reshaped how scholars understand cultural variation in communication. Despite its enduring influence, however, the framework offers only a partial account of contemporary intercultural interaction. While it successfully explains how communicative information is organised, it provides comparatively limited insight into the interactional processes through which communicative acts acquire interpersonal significance. This paper revisits Hall's framework through the context of Indo-German intercultural interaction, drawing upon illustrative examples of everyday communicative practices alongside contemporary developments in intercultural pragmatics. It argues that many misunderstandings between German and Indian interlocutors arise not primarily from differing degrees of contextual dependence but from divergent interactional expectations concerning commitment, reciprocity, personal autonomy, relational responsibility, and appropriate social conduct. Building upon Hall's foundational insights and engaging with scholarship in interpersonal pragmatics, the paper proposes that interactional expectations provide an additional analytical lens for understanding intercultural communication. Rather than replacing Hall's high-context/low-context distinction, the study demonstrates how its explanatory capacity may be extended to account for the socially negotiated interpretation of communicative behaviour. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates concerning the relationship between contextual orientation, pragmatics, and intercultural understanding while reaffirming Hall's continuing relevance within contemporary intercultural communication research.

Keywords: Edward T. Hall; high-context communication; low-context communication; intercultural pragmatics; Indo-German interaction; interactional expectations.

1. Introduction

Few theoretical frameworks have exercised as sustained an influence on intercultural communication research as Edward T. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication. Since the publication of *Beyond Culture* (1976), Hall's work has provided scholars with an enduring conceptual vocabulary for explaining how cultures differ in organising, transmitting, and interpreting communicative meaning. His central proposition—that communication varies according to the extent to which information is embedded within shared contextual knowledge rather than explicitly articulated through

language—has informed scholarship across linguistics, intercultural communication, translation studies, organisational communication, language education, and international management. Nearly five decades after its formulation, the high-context/low-context distinction continues to underpin intercultural competence training, multinational business practice, and cross-cultural research because it offers an intuitively accessible explanation for observable differences in communicative behaviour.

The influence of Hall's framework is particularly evident in discussions of national communicative styles. Within this literature, Germany has frequently been characterised as a relatively low-context society in which communicative effectiveness is associated with explicit verbalisation, precision, punctuality, and clearly articulated expectations. India, by contrast, is commonly positioned towards the higher-context end of the communicative continuum, where interpersonal relationships, shared social knowledge, contextual inference, and indirectness play a more prominent role in everyday interaction. Although contemporary scholarship rightly cautions against essentialising national cultures, these broad orientations continue to inform intercultural training, diplomatic communication, multinational workplaces, and educational exchanges, providing an influential starting point for understanding interactions between German and Indian interlocutors.

Yet the continuing prominence of Hall's framework has also exposed important theoretical questions. While the distinction between high-context and low-context communication explains how communicative meaning is organised, it offers comparatively less insight into how communicative behaviour becomes socially meaningful during interaction. Understanding communication involves considerably more than successfully decoding linguistic information. Participants must also interpret intentions, evaluate commitments, negotiate interpersonal relationships, recognise behavioural expectations, and determine what constitutes appropriate social conduct within particular cultural settings. Consequently, intercultural misunderstandings frequently arise despite accurate linguistic comprehension because interlocutors attribute different interpersonal significance to the same communicative act. A refusal, an invitation, a delayed arrival, or an unannounced visit may be perfectly intelligible at the linguistic level while simultaneously communicating different assumptions concerning politeness, reliability, respect, or relational commitment.

These challenges are particularly visible within Indo-German intercultural interaction. Hall's framework captures important differences in contextual orientation between the two societies, yet it cannot fully explain why communicative practices that appear entirely appropriate within one cultural environment may be interpreted differently in another. Literal acceptance of an initial refusal during hospitality, expectations surrounding advance appointments, differing evaluations of punctuality, or contrasting understandings of interpersonal privacy involve more than differences in explicitness or contextual dependence. Rather, they reflect culturally shared understandings of how relationships should be maintained, how commitments should be interpreted, and how consideration for others should be expressed through everyday interaction. Such examples suggest that contextual orientation alone cannot adequately account for the social interpretation of communicative behaviour.

Contemporary developments in intercultural pragmatics increasingly support this broader understanding of communication. Hall's emphasis on contextual dependence has been complemented by research demonstrating that communicative meaning emerges through the dynamic negotiation of interpersonal relationships, social norms, and culturally shared expectations. Kecskes (2014), for example, argues that intercultural communication is characterised by the continuous negotiation of meaning between interlocutors who bring different socio-cultural experiences into interaction. Similarly, Spencer-Oatey's (2008) Rapport Management framework and subsequent work in interpersonal pragmatics demonstrate that communication simultaneously involves the negotiation of face, sociality rights, relational goals, and behavioural expectations. These developments suggest that understanding intercultural communication requires attention not only to where communicative information is located but also to the culturally constituted processes through which communicative behaviour acquires interpersonal significance.

This paper makes three related contributions to intercultural communication research. First, it re-examines Hall's high-context/low-context distinction through contemporary Indo-German interaction, demonstrating that contextual orientation alone cannot adequately explain many recurring intercultural misunderstandings. Second, it synthesises insights from Hall's framework and contemporary intercultural pragmatics to argue that *interactional expectations* constitute an additional analytical dimension through which communicative behaviour becomes socially meaningful. Within this paper, interactional expectations refer to the culturally shared assumptions through which interlocutors evaluate communicative behaviour as appropriate, respectful, reliable, or relationally significant. Unlike contextual information, which concerns how meaning is conveyed, interactional expectations concern how communicative acts are interpreted within ongoing social relationships. Third, rather than positioning Hall's framework as theoretically obsolete, the paper argues that its explanatory capacity can be strengthened by integrating these interactional dimensions, thereby extending one of intercultural communication's foundational theories without abandoning its original insights.

Accordingly, the discussion that follows does not seek to replace Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication. Instead, it asks a different question: what additional analytical resources are required once interlocutors have already understood the linguistic content of communication? Addressing this question through the case of Indo-German interaction provides an opportunity not only to revisit Hall's enduring contribution but also to reconsider how intercultural communication is conceptualised within an increasingly interconnected and interactionally complex world.

2. Hall's High-Context and Low-Context Framework: Enduring Contributions and Contemporary Reconsiderations

Edward T. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication remains one of the most influential conceptual frameworks in intercultural communication.

Introduced in *Beyond Culture* (1976), the model challenged prevailing assumptions that communication could be understood primarily through linguistic form by arguing that the interpretation of meaning depends fundamentally upon culturally organised patterns of contextualisation. Rather than viewing communication as the simple transmission of information, Hall proposed that cultures differ in the extent to which communicative meaning is embedded within shared social knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and situational understanding. In high-context environments, much of the communicative message is conveyed implicitly through context, whereas in low-context environments meaning is expected to be articulated more explicitly through language. Importantly, Hall did not conceptualise these categories as fixed cultural types but as relative orientations distributed along a continuum, with communicative practices varying across situations, institutions, and social relationships.

Hall's contribution represented a significant shift in intercultural communication research because it relocated analytical attention from language itself to the social conditions under which language becomes meaningful. His framework encouraged scholars to recognise that communicative success cannot be explained solely by grammatical competence or lexical accuracy but must also account for culturally shared systems of interpretation. This insight has profoundly influenced research in intercultural communication, translation studies, language education, organisational communication, international business, and diplomacy. Concepts such as directness, indirectness, explicitness, and contextual dependence continue to shape intercultural competence training because they provide a practical vocabulary for anticipating communicative variation across cultures (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). The enduring relevance of Hall's work lies not simply in its descriptive value but in its recognition that communication is inseparable from culture.

Hall's framework has been particularly influential in comparative studies of national communicative styles. Within this tradition, Germany is frequently characterised as a relatively low-context communicative environment in which clarity, precision, punctuality, and explicit verbal commitments are regarded as important markers of effective interaction. India, by contrast, is commonly positioned towards the higher-context end of the continuum, where communicative interpretation is often informed by interpersonal relationships, shared cultural knowledge, contextual inference, and sensitivity to social hierarchy. Although such classifications necessarily simplify complex and internally diverse societies, they continue to provide a useful heuristic for examining broad tendencies in intercultural interaction. Their persistence across research, professional training, and multinational organisations reflects the analytical utility of Hall's framework as an entry point for understanding cultural variation rather than as a deterministic classification of national behaviour.

The intellectual influence of Hall's work is also evident in later developments within pragmatics and discourse analysis. While Hall focused primarily on the distribution of contextual information, Gumperz (1982) demonstrated that successful interaction additionally depends upon participants' ability to interpret contextualization cues—linguistic, prosodic, and behavioural signals through which speakers indicate how utterances should be

understood. Misunderstandings therefore arise not only because interlocutors possess different amounts of contextual knowledge but also because they interpret interactional cues according to different communicative conventions. Gumperz's work complements Hall by illustrating that communication depends simultaneously upon contextual orientation and the culturally situated interpretation of interaction itself. Together, these perspectives shifted intercultural communication away from viewing language as an autonomous system towards understanding meaning as an achievement of social interaction.

Despite its considerable explanatory value, Hall's framework has attracted sustained scholarly reassessment over the past three decades. One of the most frequently discussed concerns is its tendency to present national cultures as relatively coherent communicative systems. Contemporary intercultural scholarship has increasingly demonstrated that communicative practices are shaped not only by national culture but also by professional communities, institutional contexts, multilingual repertoires, migration, generational differences, digital communication, and intersecting social identities (Holliday, 2011; Piller, 2017). Individuals routinely participate in multiple communicative communities simultaneously, adapting their interactional behaviour according to the demands of particular contexts. Consequently, contemporary intercultural encounters are often characterised less by the application of stable cultural norms than by the ongoing negotiation of communicative expectations across diverse social environments.

Yet the principal limitation of Hall's framework is not that it oversimplifies national cultures; rather, it concerns the analytical scope of the theory itself. Hall explains how communicative meaning is organised, but he offers comparatively less explanation of how communicative behaviour becomes socially interpretable once linguistic meaning has been understood. Successful interaction requires considerably more than recognising the propositional content of an utterance. Participants must also determine whether a refusal should be interpreted literally or politely, whether punctuality signals efficiency or interpersonal respect, whether direct criticism reflects honesty or discourtesy, and whether an invitation establishes a genuine commitment or merely expresses goodwill. These questions concern not the organisation of contextual information but the culturally embedded expectations through which communicative acts acquire interpersonal significance.

This shift in emphasis has become increasingly prominent within contemporary intercultural pragmatics. Kecskes (2014) argues that intercultural communication is not the mechanical application of culturally predetermined norms but a dynamic process in which interlocutors continuously negotiate meaning through their differing socio-cultural experiences. Similarly, Spencer-Oatey's (2008) Rapport Management framework demonstrates that communication simultaneously involves the negotiation of face, sociality rights, interactional goals, and behavioural expectations. Work in interpersonal pragmatics has further shown that politeness, trust, relational alignment, and social cooperation emerge through interaction itself rather than existing as fixed cultural properties (Locher & Graham, 2010; Haugh, 2017). Collectively, these perspectives suggest that communication cannot be understood solely by

examining where information is located; it must also account for the interactional processes through which communicative actions become socially meaningful.

This paper builds upon these developments without departing from Hall's original insight. Rather than treating the distinction between high-context and low-context communication as theoretically inadequate, it argues that Hall's framework remains an indispensable foundation for understanding intercultural communication. However, its explanatory reach can be strengthened by integrating attention to interactional expectations—the culturally shared assumptions through which communicative behaviour is interpreted as appropriate, respectful, reliable, or relationally significant. The following section develops this argument through the case of Indo-German intercultural interaction, demonstrating that many communicative misunderstandings arise not from failures to understand language or context but from differences in how interlocutors evaluate the interpersonal significance of communicative behaviour.

3. Beyond Contextual Orientation: Interactional Expectations in Indo-German Intercultural Interaction

The preceding discussion suggests that Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication remains indispensable for explaining how communicative information is organised across cultures. Yet contemporary intercultural interaction demonstrates that communicative success depends upon more than the location of meaning within language or context. In many instances, German and Indian interlocutors understand the linguistic content of an interaction without difficulty, but nevertheless arrive at different interpretations of what that interaction *means* socially. The source of misunderstanding, therefore, is often not semantic ambiguity but divergent assumptions regarding how communicative behaviour should be interpreted within ongoing interpersonal relationships. Examining Indo-German interaction through this perspective reveals that communication involves not only contextual orientation but also culturally shared expectations concerning commitment, reciprocity, personal autonomy, and relational responsibility.

One domain in which these differences become particularly visible is hospitality. Within many Indian social settings, an initial refusal of food, refreshments, or assistance frequently functions as a conventional expression of modesty or consideration rather than as a definitive rejection. The interaction often unfolds through a sequence of reciprocal offers and refusals in which both host and guest participate in negotiating the appropriate outcome. A host who insists may therefore be perceived as demonstrating warmth, generosity, and attentiveness to the relationship, while a guest who eventually accepts reciprocates this relational engagement. Within many German contexts, however, an explicit refusal is generally interpreted as an authentic statement of individual preference. Continuing to insist after such a refusal may consequently be viewed not as hospitality but as an unnecessary intrusion upon personal autonomy. Importantly, the misunderstanding does not arise because either interlocutor fails to understand the words that have been spoken. Rather, it emerges because

the same communicative act—a refusal—is evaluated through different interactional norms governing sincerity, politeness, and the respective responsibilities of hosts and guests. Hall's framework explains why one interaction relies more heavily upon contextual inference than the other, but it provides comparatively little explanation of why identical communicative behaviour generates divergent expectations concerning appropriate interpersonal conduct.

A similar pattern is evident in communicative practices surrounding punctuality and interpersonal coordination. Hall associated low-context cultures with monochronic orientations to time and greater reliance upon explicit scheduling. While this observation remains valuable, punctuality within many German contexts functions as more than a mechanism for organising time efficiently. Arriving at an agreed time, communicating delays promptly, and respecting previously established appointments frequently communicate reliability, accountability, and consideration for another person's commitments. In many Indian contexts, by contrast, greater flexibility in coordinating social interaction may reflect responsiveness to changing interpersonal or situational demands rather than a diminished sense of responsibility. Consequently, delayed arrival or rescheduling may be interpreted as a practical adjustment within one communicative environment while being perceived as signalling unreliability within another. The interactional significance of punctuality therefore cannot be understood solely through contextual dependence. Rather, it emerges from culturally shared understandings of how respect, responsibility, and interpersonal commitment should be enacted through everyday communicative behaviour.

Differences in interactional expectations are equally apparent in practices relating to interpersonal boundaries. Everyday behaviours such as visiting acquaintances without prior notice, asking questions concerning family or personal circumstances, or extending invitations often reflect broader assumptions about the relationship between accessibility and social closeness. Within many German contexts, advance notice before a visit is commonly interpreted as recognising another person's autonomy and respecting their control over personal time. Declining an unexpected visit generally carries little implication of interpersonal rejection because maintaining appropriate boundaries is itself regarded as a form of social consideration. Within many Indian contexts, however, spontaneous visits and frequent interpersonal engagement may function as ordinary expressions of familiarity, trust, and communal belonging. Consequently, identical communicative behaviour—for example, postponing an unexpected visit—may communicate consideration in one setting while suggesting emotional distance in another. Once again, these contrasting interpretations arise not from differences in linguistic comprehension but from differing expectations regarding how relationships should be maintained and demonstrated through everyday interaction.

These differences become even more visible within institutional and professional communication, where interlocutors frequently assume that shared linguistic competence guarantees shared communicative understanding. Consider, for example, an exchange between a German doctoral supervisor and an Indian doctoral student. A supervisor writes, *"Please revise Chapters Two and Three and send me the revised draft by Friday."* The student replies, "I'll try my best." Linguistically, the exchange appears entirely

straightforward. Yet the response may carry different interactional implications for each participant. Within many German academic contexts, the supervisor may interpret the reply as indicating uncertainty regarding commitment because the requested task has not been explicitly accepted. Within many Indian communicative contexts, however, "*I'll try*" often functions as a polite acknowledgment of responsibility that simultaneously avoids overpromising while expressing respect towards institutional authority. Neither participant misunderstands the linguistic content of the message. Rather, they evaluate the communicative act through different expectations concerning commitment, obligation, and appropriate professional conduct. Hall's distinction between contextual dependence and explicitness provides only a partial explanation of this interaction because the misunderstanding concerns the interpersonal interpretation of commitment rather than the organisation of communicative information itself.

Non-verbal communication further demonstrates the limitations of interpreting intercultural interaction exclusively through contextual orientation. Eye contact, interpersonal distance, silence, facial expression, and conversational turn-taking all contribute to the construction of communicative meaning, yet their interpretation depends upon culturally shared understandings of attentiveness, hierarchy, confidence, and respect. Direct eye contact during conversation may communicate openness and sincerity within many German contexts while being moderated according to age, authority, or social relationship in some Indian contexts. Likewise, conversational silence may function as reflective engagement in one interactional environment but generate uncertainty or discomfort in another. These communicative resources cannot be adequately understood simply by asking whether a culture is more or less context-dependent. Rather, they derive their social significance from the interactional conventions through which participants interpret behavioural cues during communication.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the principal challenge in Indo-German intercultural communication is rarely the inability to decode linguistic meaning. Instead, misunderstandings persist because interlocutors assign different interpersonal significance to communicative behaviour that is otherwise fully comprehensible. A refusal, an appointment, an expression of commitment, or a period of silence becomes socially meaningful only through the culturally shared expectations that govern its interpretation. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication therefore remains indispensable for understanding how communicative information is organised, but it explains only one dimension of intercultural interaction. Equally important is understanding how participants negotiate the interpersonal meaning of communicative behaviour through culturally embedded interactional expectations. It is this dimension that contemporary intercultural pragmatics invites scholars to examine more closely.

4. Reframing Hall: Integrating Contextual Orientation and Interactional Expectations

The preceding analysis does not suggest that Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication has lost its theoretical relevance. On the contrary, Hall's framework continues to provide one of the most influential explanations of how cultures organise communicative information through differing orientations towards explicit language and shared contextual knowledge. The challenge, however, lies in recognising that contextual orientation alone does not exhaust the complexity of intercultural communication. Once interlocutors have successfully interpreted the linguistic content of an interaction, they must still determine how that communicative behaviour should be understood within the interpersonal relationship. It is at this stage that many intercultural misunderstandings emerge, revealing a dimension of communication that extends beyond Hall's original analytical focus.

In this paper, interactional expectations are conceptualised as the culturally shared assumptions through which interlocutors evaluate communicative behaviour as appropriate, respectful, trustworthy, or socially meaningful. Unlike contextual information, which concerns the organisation and transmission of communicative meaning, interactional expectations concern the interpretation of communicative action within ongoing social relationships. They shape how participants evaluate commitment, reciprocity, politeness, interpersonal responsibility, personal autonomy, and relational obligations during interaction. Importantly, interactional expectations do not operate independently of contextual orientation. Rather, both dimensions function simultaneously, with contextual knowledge informing what is communicated and interactional expectations influencing how communicative behaviour is socially interpreted.

This distinction helps explain why communicative misunderstandings frequently persist despite successful linguistic comprehension. German and Indian interlocutors may understand precisely what has been said while nevertheless disagreeing about what the communicative act signifies within the relationship. A refusal may be interpreted as either a definitive decision or a conventional expression of modesty; punctuality may communicate organisational efficiency or interpersonal reliability; an unexpected visit may signify social warmth or an intrusion upon personal autonomy; a response such as *"I'll try"* may indicate uncertainty or responsible acknowledgement. In each instance, the propositional meaning of the utterance remains relatively stable, whereas its interpersonal significance varies according to culturally shared interactional expectations. Consequently, intercultural communication cannot be adequately understood by examining contextual dependence alone because communicative behaviour acquires social meaning through processes of interpretation that extend beyond linguistic form.

Contemporary developments in intercultural pragmatics provide important theoretical support for this perspective. Kecskes (2014) argues that intercultural communication is fundamentally characterised by the negotiation of meaning between interlocutors whose socio-cultural experiences only partially overlap. Rather than applying fixed cultural conventions, participants actively construct shared understanding through interaction itself. Spencer-Oatey's (2008) Rapport Management framework similarly demonstrates that communication

involves the continual negotiation of face, sociality rights, interactional goals, and behavioural expectations. Work in interpersonal pragmatics further suggests that trust, politeness, relational alignment, and social cooperation emerge through interaction rather than existing as predetermined cultural properties (Locher & Graham, 2010; Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Haugh, 2017). Collectively, these perspectives indicate that communication should be understood not merely as the exchange of information but as the ongoing negotiation of interpersonal relationships through culturally situated interpretative practices.

Seen from this perspective, Hall's framework is perhaps best understood as identifying one analytical dimension of intercultural communication rather than providing a comprehensive account of communicative difference. High-context and low-context orientations explain how communicative information is distributed between language and context; interactional expectations explain how communicative behaviour becomes socially intelligible once that information has been interpreted. The relationship between these dimensions is therefore complementary rather than hierarchical. Hall's model does not become theoretically inadequate because it fails to explain every aspect of communication. Rather, its explanatory strength becomes clearer when situated alongside contemporary approaches that illuminate the interactional processes through which communicative meaning is negotiated.

The implications of this perspective extend beyond the Indo-German cases examined in this paper. Increasingly, intercultural interaction occurs within multilingual universities, multinational organisations, transnational research collaborations, and digitally mediated professional environments, where interlocutors routinely possess sufficient linguistic competence to communicate effectively. Difficulties in these contexts frequently arise not because participants misunderstand words or grammatical structures, but because they interpret commitment, politeness, authority, initiative, or cooperation according to different interactional conventions. Understanding these encounters therefore requires analytical frameworks capable of explaining both the organisation of communicative meaning and the culturally situated interpretation of communicative action. Integrating contextual orientation with interactional expectations offers one possible way of addressing this challenge.

Accordingly, the contribution of this paper is not to replace Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication with an alternative model. Rather, it is to demonstrate that Hall's enduring insights can be productively reinterpreted through contemporary developments in intercultural pragmatics. Such a perspective preserves the explanatory value of contextual orientation while acknowledging that successful intercultural communication ultimately depends upon more than understanding what is said. It also depends upon understanding how communicative behaviour is interpreted, evaluated, and responded to within culturally organised systems of interpersonal expectation. Revisiting Hall in this way allows one of intercultural communication's foundational theories to remain analytically relevant in increasingly complex communicative environments.

5. Conclusion

Edward T. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication continues to occupy a foundational place within intercultural communication scholarship. Few theoretical models have exercised comparable influence in shaping how researchers conceptualise cultural variation in communicative practice. By demonstrating that cultures differ in the extent to which meaning is embedded within contextual knowledge or explicitly articulated through language, Hall fundamentally redirected scholarly attention from language as an autonomous system towards communication as a culturally organised social process. Nearly five decades after the publication of *Beyond Culture*, this insight remains indispensable for understanding why communicative practices differ across societies.

At the same time, the analysis presented in this paper suggests that Hall's framework is best understood as explaining one important dimension of intercultural communication rather than providing a comprehensive account of communicative interaction. Through the case of Indo-German intercultural interaction, the discussion has shown that many communicative misunderstandings arise despite the successful interpretation of linguistic meaning. Refusals, invitations, punctuality, interpersonal boundaries, institutional communication, and non-verbal behaviour become sites of misunderstanding because interlocutors assign different interpersonal significance to communicative behaviour that is otherwise linguistically intelligible. These differences concern not simply how meaning is conveyed but how communicative action is interpreted within culturally organised systems of social expectation.

Building upon developments in intercultural pragmatics and interpersonal pragmatics, this paper has argued that interactional expectations constitute an essential analytical dimension for understanding such encounters. Whereas Hall's framework explains how communicative information is organised, interactional expectations illuminate how communicative behaviour is evaluated in relation to commitment, reciprocity, trust, personal autonomy, relational responsibility, and appropriate social conduct. These dimensions should not be regarded as alternatives to Hall's distinction but as complementary perspectives that together provide a more comprehensive understanding of intercultural communication. Integrating contextual orientation with interactional expectations therefore strengthens rather than diminishes Hall's original contribution, enabling the framework to engage more effectively with the complexity of contemporary intercultural interaction.

The implications of this argument extend beyond the Indo-German context explored here. As intercultural communication increasingly occurs within multilingual universities, international research collaborations, multinational organisations, and digitally mediated professional environments, communicative difficulties are less frequently attributable to inadequate linguistic competence than to differing assumptions about how communicative behaviour should be interpreted. Greater attention to interactional expectations may therefore enrich intercultural training, language education, professional communication, and institutional collaboration by encouraging participants to examine not only differences in communicative style but also the culturally situated principles through which interpersonal meaning is negotiated.

The present study is intentionally theoretical and uses Indo-German interaction as an illustrative case rather than as the basis for broad empirical generalisation. Future research should examine interactional expectations through qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, including discourse analysis, ethnographic observation, interactional sociolinguistics, and naturally occurring institutional communication. Comparative investigations across additional linguistic and cultural contexts would further clarify whether the relationship between contextual orientation and interactional expectations identified here represents a broader pattern of intercultural communication or varies according to particular communicative settings.

Ultimately, revisiting Hall through contemporary intercultural pragmatics demonstrates that understanding intercultural communication requires more than identifying where communicative meaning is located. It also requires examining how communicative behaviour becomes socially intelligible through culturally shared processes of interpretation. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context communication therefore remains an indispensable foundation rather than a complete explanation of intercultural communication. Recognising the complementary relationship between contextual orientation and interactional expectations not only preserves the enduring value of Hall's framework but also opens new avenues for understanding the relational, interpretative, and negotiated nature of communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

References

- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence (Multilingual Matters)*. Multilingual Matters.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of studies in international education*, 10(3), 241-266.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies* (No. 1). Cambridge university press.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Press/Double day. Garden City, New York.
- Culpeper J, Haugh M. (Im)politeness and Sociopragmatics. In: Haugh M, Kádár DZ, Terkourafi M, eds. *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*. Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics. Cambridge University Press;
- Holliday, A. (2011). *Intercultural communication and ideology*.
- Kádár, D. Z., & Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kecskes, I. (2014). *Intercultural pragmatics*. OUP Us.

Locher, M. A., & Graham, S. L. (2010). Introduction to interpersonal pragmatics. *Interpersonal pragmatics*, 6, 1-13.

Piller, I. (2017) *Intercultural Communication A Critical Introduction*. 2nd Edition, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (Ed.). (2008). *Culturally speaking second edition: Culture, communication and politeness theory*. Bloomsbury Publishing.