

Unexpected Interview Methods in Cross Cultural Deception Detection

Irina Tache

Why is Culture Important?

We ‘may as well be guessing’

In cross-cultural interactions, we are no better than chance at determining whether someone is lying to us.

Current lie detection methods may not be optimised to be used with people from differing cultural backgrounds.

The majority of studies looking for both verbal and non-verbal signs to deception have looked at people from similar cultural backgrounds, such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, or the Netherlands. The findings from these and other studies looking at Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) cultures may not apply to all cultures.

Culture influences how people interact.

Depending on someone’s cultural background, a person:

- Can perceive a friendly interviewer as weak
- May believe it more acceptable to lie about certain topics
- Can act aggressively to protect their image or
- May avoid eye contact in order to be polite.

Culture influences how people speak.

Culture is a shared system of meanings and values passed down through generations. If people place different value on different aspects of an event, then they will talk more about what is important to them, and not what is important to the interviewer. This can appear suspicious and can lead to mistakes in judging someone as honest or not.

Unexpected Interview Methods

Not knowing what to expect in interviews makes it difficult for liars to keep their story straight.

Methods that are unexpected in an interview catch out liars while often helping honest people give more details. Such methods are:

- Asking **unexpected questions** about aspects of an event
- Having interviewees listen to a very detailed **model statement**
- Making them **sketch** the event that happened or
- Asking them to create a detailed **timeline** of the events that happened.

Could culture influence these methods?

Depending on a person’s cultural background different cultures could:

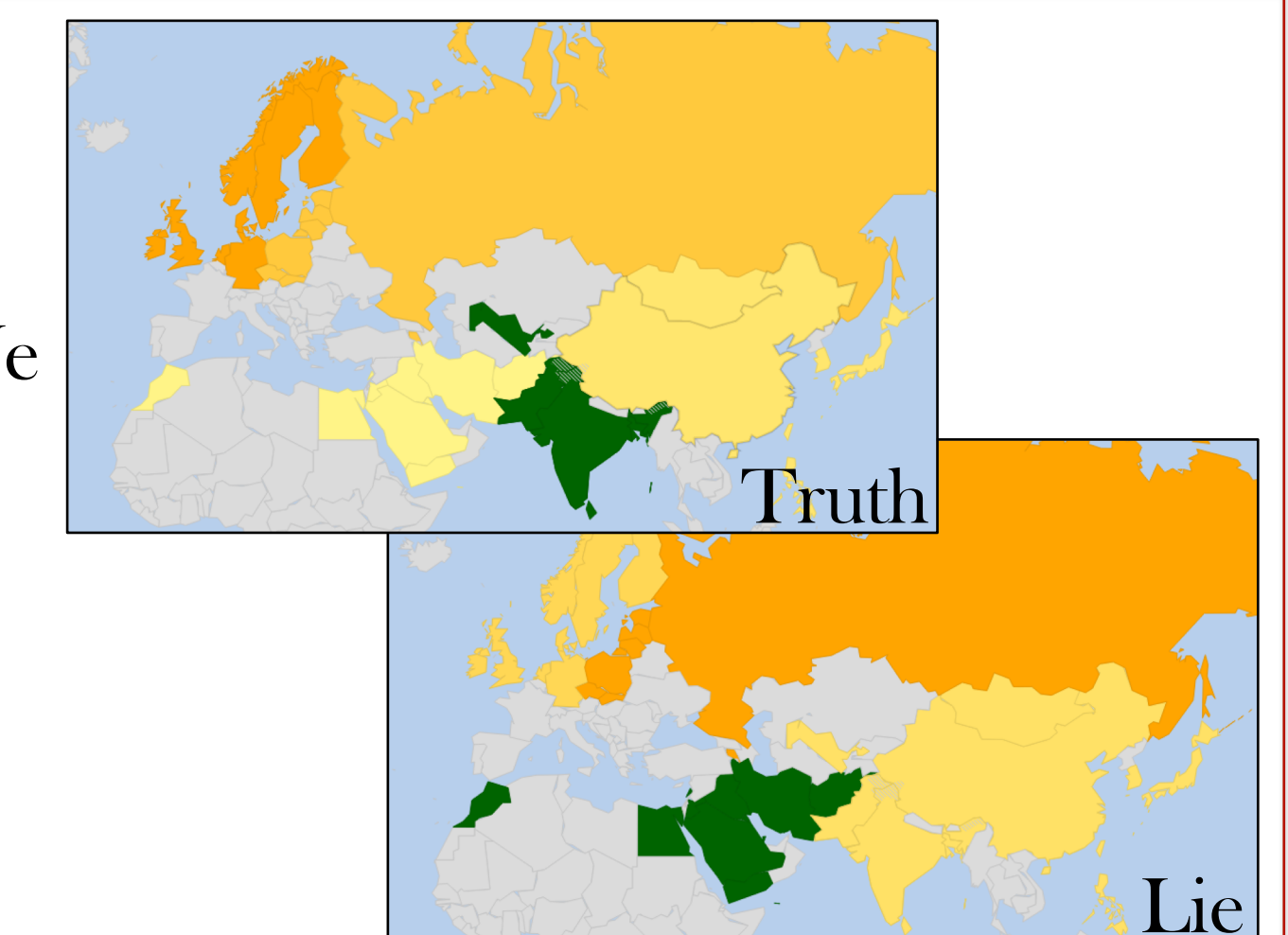
- Expect the unexpected or not expect the standard interview questions
- Give as many details before and after listening to the model statement
- Sketch omitting aspects of the event relevant to the interviewer
- Have difficulty expressing events in a linear manner.

Culture, Lying, and Language Use

There are differences, that depend on cultural background, in the ways in which people speak when they lie.

People protect what is most important to them. Liars tends to withhold from their story that which is important to them. We looked for similar trends when comparing the speech of people of a range of cultures.

These maps show the differences in words that interviewees, truth tellers and liars, used to describe their internal thinking (**orange**) compared to other people (**green**). Cultures from West Asia and Central Asia change this use of language when they lie, while others, like East Asia, do not. These results originally highlighted for us how methods of lie detection, developed on WEIRD cultures, may not be generalisable.



Culture, Lying, and Unexpected Questions

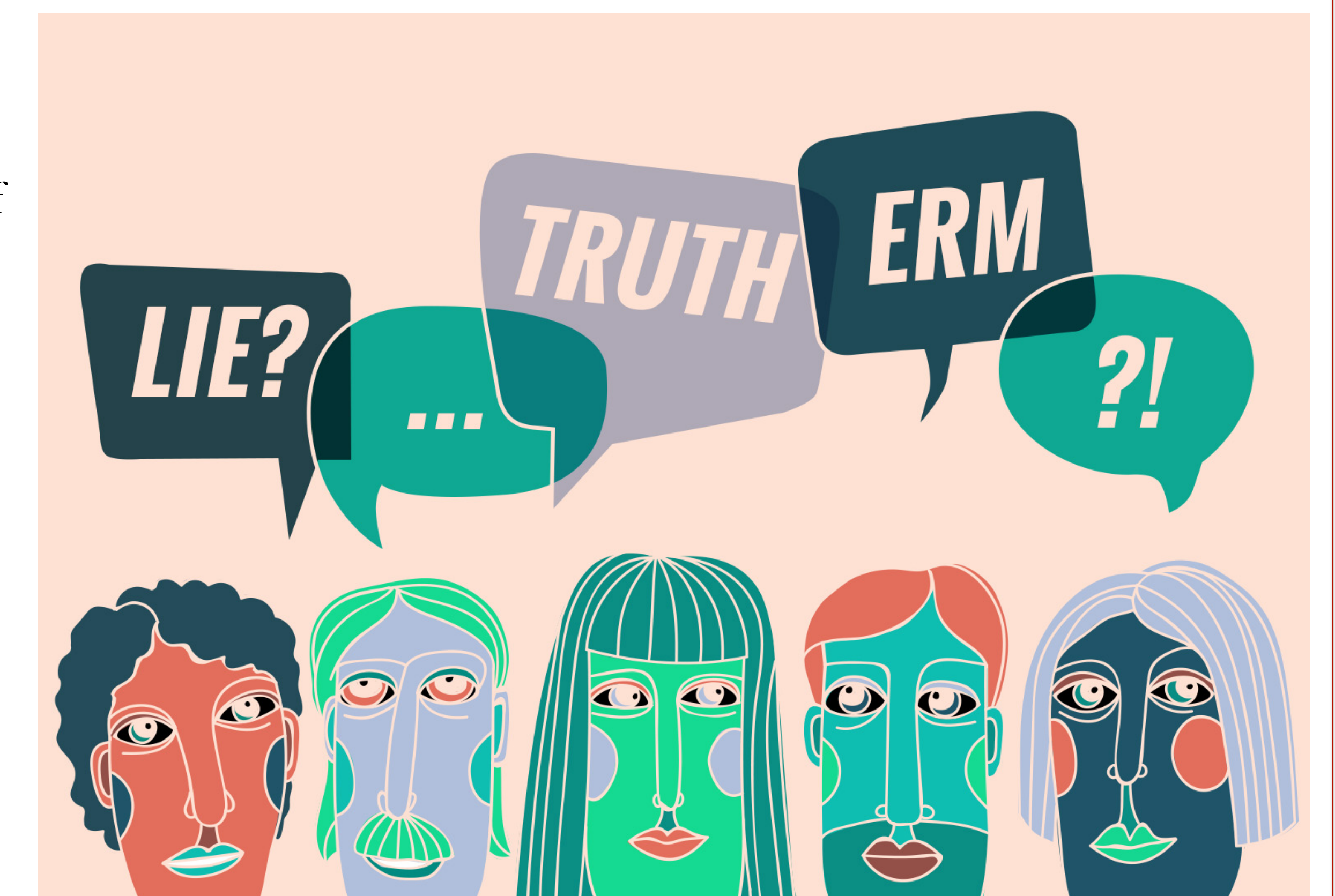
Different cultural values lead to different question expectations during interviews.

For this study we looked at people from individualist (**IND**) and collectivist (**COL**) cultures. The IND-COL dimension is a cultural dimension that scores countries based on how much people value their individuality compared to their belonging to a social group (e.g. family, friends, work group). A pilot study found that culture can influence what questions are anticipated in an interview.

Language differences between truth tellers and liars were entirely accounted for by culture.

Out of seven types of language use, such as personal pronouns, affective words, and negations, only the use of words to do with relativity (location, position) were indicators of deception depending on cultural background. Answering questions expected by collectivists, collectivist liars use fewer relativity words than collectivist truth tellers.

Pilot Rating	Question
Expected	When you arrive at your destination, who is the first person you will see and why?
IND Expected/ COL Unexpected	Please describe your intention in as much detail as possible.
COL Expected/ IND Unexpected	When travelling to your destination, what part would you say is the most important?
Unexpected	How will your trip affect the people you are leaving behind?



A Tale of Caution

We find that culture has a greater influence on people’s language than whether they are lying or not.

Knowledge of how people’s language use changes when people lie is not enough to detect liars. It is important to consider their cultural background. We find that people’s language is driven by their cultural background to such a degree that whether they are lying or not becomes secondary.

It is important to continue to explore the differences driven by cultural background.

In order to better protect ourselves, the investigative interview must be as efficient as possible. This line of research aims to offer simple recommendations on how to adapt interviewing questions to maximise the differences between liars and truth tellers depending on the interviewee’s cultural background. The findings so far paint a complex picture, as expected when attempting to disentangle culture.