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Bachelor's thesis

**SOCIAL STATUS FACTOR IN MODERN CROSS-CULTURAL
COMMUNICATION**

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ABSTRACT

This Bachelor's Paper explores the impact of social status on modern cross-cultural communication, focusing on linguistic markers and behaviors. The study uses Discourse Analysis and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to investigate how social status influences intercultural dialogue.

Chapter 1 contains a survey of linguistic publications on social status, culture-specific language choices, politeness, and power distance. The chapter delves into theoretical frameworks from scholars such as William Labov, who studied sociolinguistic variation, Geert Hofstede, who developed the cultural dimensions theory, and Edward T. Hall, known for his work on high- and low-context communication. Additionally, the chapter discusses the concept of "face" and politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson, which are crucial for managing interpersonal relationships. The relevance of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is examined to understand how individuals adapt their speech patterns to align with or diverge from their interlocutors, influenced by social status.

Chapter 2 focuses on verbal markers of social status in modern cross-cultural communication, using the 2019 film "The Farewell" as a case study. This chapter provides an analysis of how social status is portrayed through language in the film, highlighting the contrasts between Eastern and Western communication styles. The analysis includes the use of kinship terms, which reflect hierarchical relationships within the family, and the distinction between directness and indirectness in communication, illustrating how different cultures manage social hierarchy and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, the chapter examines politeness strategies employed by the characters to

navigate social status and maintain harmony within the family. The study compares cultural specifics of social status in fictional settings, emphasizing differences between collectivist and individualist communication norms.

Key words: social status, linguistic marker, communication style, social hierarchy.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Кваліфікаційна робота бакалавра досліджує вплив соціального статусу на сучасну міжкультурну комунікацію, акцентуючи увагу на лінгвістичних маркерах та моделях поведінки. Дослідження використовує дискурс-аналіз та теорію комунікативної акомодатії (CAT) для вивчення того, як соціальний статус впливає на міжкультурний діалог.

Розділ 1 включає огляд лінгвістичних публікацій про соціальний статус, культурно-специфічний вибір мови, мовну ввічливість та дистанцію влади. Розділ заглиблюється в теоретичні засади таких вчених, як Вільям Лабов, який вивчав соціолінгвістичну варіативність, Герт Гофстеде, який розробив теорію культурних вимірів, та Едвард Т. Холл, відомий своєю роботою про висококонтекстну та низькоконтекстну комунікацію. Крім того, у розділі обговорюється концепція «обличчя» та стратегії ввічливості Брауна і Левінсона, які мають вирішальне значення для управління міжособистісними стосунками. Розглядається актуальність теорії комунікативної адаптації (CAT) для розуміння того, як люди пристосовують свої мовленнєві патерни, адаптуючись до своїх співрозмовників або віддаляючись від них під впливом соціального статусу.

Розділ 2 присвячений вербальним маркерам соціального статусу в сучасній міжкультурній комунікації на прикладі фільму «Прощання» 2019 року. У цьому розділі представлено аналіз того, як соціальний статус зображується за допомогою мови у фільмі, підкреслюючи контрасти між східним і західним стилями комунікації. Аналіз включає використання термінів спорідненості, які відображають ієрархічні

відносини в сім'ї, а також відмінність між прямою і непрямістю у спілкуванні, що ілюструє, як різні культури керують соціальною ієрархією і міжособистісними відносинами. Крім того, у розділі розглядаються стратегії ввічливості, які застосовують персонажі, щоб зорієнтуватися в соціальному статусі та підтримувати гармонію в родині. У дослідженні порівнюються культурні особливості соціального статусу у вигаданих ситуаціях, підкреслюються відмінності між колективістськими та індивідуалістичними нормами спілкування.

Ключові слова: соціальний статус, мовний маркер, стиль спілкування, соціальна ієрархія.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of social status in the field of cross-cultural communication studies. has been increasingly acknowledged since the late 20th century, This concept has been explored from a linguistic point of view for its significant impact on both individual and collective behaviours in diverse cultural environments. Social hierarchy impacts communication practices and speech patterns. Furthermore, it shapes the dynamics of power imbalances and personal identity within the context of various social roles.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, social status is closely linked with critical communication elements such as High and Low Cultures, Politeness, Power Distance, and Accommodation Theory. These components affect how individuals from various cultural backgrounds interact and understand each other, constructing communication in both subtle and explicit ways. Furthermore, the interconnection of social status with such variables as ethnicity, gender, and economic status introduces additional complexity to interactions across cultures, demanding a comprehensive study of these factors.

The study of Social Status in Cross-Cultural Communication has been enriched by the research of such scholars as Van Dijk (1998), William Labov (1966), Jane Grimshaw (1990), E.T. Hall (1959), F. Trompenaars (1997), G. Hofstede (1980), and S. Ting-Toomey (1999), among others. In this paper, we will study the structural and functional aspects of social status as it relates to cross-cultural communication, with a particular focus on how it affects interaction patterns, communication strategies, and the overall discourse in multicultural environments, particularly in the field of cinematic discourse.

The subject of the paper is the social status in cross-cultural communication.

The objects of the research are linguistic means used to verbalize social status across cultures and in Modern English communication.

Relevance for the study. The social status factor is highly relevant in modern cross-cultural communication, as it can profoundly impact language use, power dynamics and the overall effectiveness of intercultural interactions. In the academic analysis of the Social Status Factor within cross-cultural communication, the focus often lies on its influence on communicative behaviours and interactional dynamics. It is crucial to analyze how differences in social status influence the use of verbal and non-verbal tools in interactions. Consequently, the choice of communication strategies must be related to the context, adapting to the specific requirements of cross-cultural dialogue. This perspective highlights the need for a flexible and culturally aware communication framework.

The social status factor also affects power dynamics in cross-cultural communication. In situations where there is a significant power imbalance between individuals from different social status backgrounds, the more powerful individual may dominate the communication, using their social status to influence the direction of the interaction. In some cases, it can lead to the marginalization of the less powerful individual, who may struggle to express their opinions or assert their needs. To effectively navigate these complexities, it is essential to adopt a context-sensitive approach to communication. This involves selecting communication strategies that align with the demands of cross-cultural discourse. This may involve adapting language and communication styles to accommodate the social status

differences between individuals, as well as being sensitive to the cultural norms and values that shape communication in different contexts.

The main purpose of the research is to describe and analyse the linguistic features of social status in modern cross-cultural communication.

The following **objectives** were determined in this paper:

- To define social status in terms of linguistic study;
- To identify culture-specific language choices and features;
- To explore the notion of politeness and its cultural specificity;
- To evaluate the relevance of Communication Accommodation Theory in the context of social status;
- To identify verbal markers of social status in modern English-language cinematic discourse;
- To compare culture-specific features of social status between Western and Eastern communicative styles.

In this paper, we used such **methods** of scientific research as analysis and synthesis, systematisation of theoretical material, observation, comparative method, descriptive method and generalising of the retrieved facts and data, discourse analysis and power dynamics analysis.

The novelty of the paper. The paper goes beyond identifying communication styles. It focuses on the specific linguistic tools, such as sentence structure (imperatives in Nai Nai's commands), vocabulary choices (proverbs, compliments), and speech acts (indirect requests). The analysis doesn't treat communication styles in isolation. Instead, it connects them directly to the characters' social standing within the family and the broader

cultural context. This reveals how language choices become a reflection of power dynamics and the level of respect intended.

The practical value. The topic of this paper can be used as a reference guide in lectures on sociolinguistics, media linguistics and communication studies and can also be used as a discussion topic for Language Universities students. The study offers essential material for training initiatives in cross-cultural communication helping professionals from various fields to enhance their communication skills.

The paper consists of the following parts: an introduction, two chapters, conclusions to each chapter, general conclusion, the list of references, the list of illustrative material, summary.

1. THEORETICAL INVENTORY OF LINGUISTIC RESEARCH INTO SOCIAL STATUS

1.1. Linguistic approaches to social status

In the scope of linguistics studies, language functions as a profound marker of identity, influenced by variables such as social class, ethnicity, regional differences, and gender. Economic disparity lays the groundwork for social class systems. These systems categorize individuals into distinct groups based not only on wealth, power, and educational attainment but also on their characteristic language use (Sodah 2019: 960).

Different societies may have unique class structures that reflect their specific cultural, historical, and economic contexts. For instance, caste systems in India or tribal affiliations in various African nations play significant roles in social stratification, which differ markedly from Western models based on economic production (Sodah 2019: 961).

Regarding linguistics study, William Labov in his examination of English language variation on Manhattan's Lower East Side, utilized three criteria—occupation, education, and income—to classify individuals into distinct social classes. Through his analysis, Labov identified multiple linguistic variables and discovered significant correlations between how frequently different language variants were used and the social class of the speakers, as defined by his classification criteria (Labov 2006: 40-45).

Variations in speech notably indicate an individual's social standing, where adherence to standard dialects is typically associated with a higher education degree and, consequently, a more elevated social status. This relationship between language and social hierarchy has evolved significantly from early survey studies, which primarily viewed social class as a direct

source of linguistic patterns, to more contemporary frameworks that highlight the importance of social practices and individual agency in linguistic expression (Snell 2013: 2). Social status is also reflected in linguistic markers of social relations, such as politeness conventions, forms of address, and communication registers. The choice and use of these linguistic resources varies depending on the status and roles of the communicators, as well as the social context (Hymes 1972: 58–59).

Further exploration within the field of sociolinguistics indicates that language functions not only as a mirror reflecting our social identities but also as a tool for actively constructing them. Sociolinguistics emphasizes ethnographic methods to understand the social context of language use. For example, in certain contexts, ethnic groups employ language as a means of solidarity and to distinguish themselves from dominant groups, particularly when they constitute a minority. A notable instance of this is the use of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), which functions both as a marker of cultural identity and a point of stigmatization within the broader American societal context (Stavenhagen-Helgren 2020: 84).

Hymes's concept of the "ethnography of communication" provides a basis for analyzing linguistic events within their cultural and social contexts, highlighting how language reflects and shapes social structures and relationships. In the ethnography of communication, researchers undertake the task of investigating the discourse through a culturally sensitive perspective. This involves an examination of how individuals speak, including the nuances of language usage and the embedded linguistic characteristics that reflect cultural norms, values, traditions and social dynamics (Bernstein 2004: 465–470).

It should be mentioned that social context is also reflected by code-switching, the alternation between different languages or dialects within a single conversation. While early sociolinguistic studies focused on dialect surveys to examine the correlation between speech variation and social class or ethnic identity, code-switching presents a more nuanced challenge. Interpretive sociolinguists argue that code-switching reflects speakers' abilities to navigate social contexts, suggesting that it is not merely normatively guided but rooted in pragmatic and social considerations (Maynard, Douglas & Peräkylä 2006). As well as speech patterns reflect social identities, the alignment of speech patterns with social class, particularly the association of standard dialects with higher status and education, illustrates a crucial aspect of how language functions as a marker of social stratification (Block 2015: 4). A well-defined class system is the characterization of Western societies. This system establishes a social hierarchy that can potentially generate societal conflict. This hierarchical arrangement is reflected in language usage patterns, where distinctions based on social class are prominent and often lead to significant differences in linguistic expression. Within this context, systematic variations in language use between males and females are observed, even within specific social classes (Kerswill 2009: 364).

Received Pronunciation (RP) in British English highlights the intersection of language and social status. As "the Queen's English," RP's distinct pronunciations, historically associated with the British aristocracy, signify prestige. The perceived association between social class and speech patterns is further embodied by its connection to elite educational institutions and media portrayals. However, this reinforces social stratification by fostering accent bias and social exclusion. While RP offers benefits in certain contexts, its hegemony underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing power dynamics within the language for promoting social equity (Agha, 2003: 216).

Core surveys by researchers like William Labov highlighted that linguistic patterns differ markedly across social classes (Labov 2006: 40-45). Labov demonstrated how pronunciation features varied systematically with social class. Labov's approach was pioneering in that it linked quantitative analysis with sociolinguistic theory, showing how subtle linguistic variables could signal broader social processes (Drummond 2010: 50). For instance, individuals from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to adopt standard linguistic forms compared to those from working-class backgrounds (Snell 2013: 3). Therefore, middle-class individuals tend to adjust their speech patterns with standard linguistic forms as a means of social navigation and upward mobility. This interconnection is not merely a passive reflection of social class but an active engagement in social practices that enhance one's social capital within various communities of practice (Block 2015: 11).

The discourse approach extends beyond the sentence or clause level to examine how language is organized and used in context, considering both spoken and textual forms of communication. Grimshaw's approach to discourse analysis integrates sociological variables into formal models of speech acts. By considering variables such as power, affect, and utility, Grimshaw points out how social factors shape linguistic interactions. This complements earlier work by Labov by highlighting the role of cultural and social knowledge in determining discourse rules and appropriateness (Grimshaw 1972: 50-55).

Van Dijk's perspective emphasizes the importance of context and power dynamics in discourse analysis. Viewing discourse as a form of social action, van Dijk underscores how language choices, topic selection, and rhetorical devices reflect and perpetuate power imbalances within society (van Dijk 1997: 65). Educated elite societies wield influence over language status, dictating which language varieties hold prestige and dominance within

society. This influence stems from their social and political power, contributing to the establishment of linguistic hierarchies (Sodah 2019: 961).

Against the backdrop of a globally interconnected and technologically advanced world characterized by ethnic diversity and cross-cultural interactions, modern sociolinguistics underscores the complexity of linguistic practices. It advocates for a more profound understanding of language with its multimodal contexts, highlighting the necessity to consider language alongside various modes of communication and meaning-making (Wang 2023).

Modern sociolinguistics insists on the importance of systemic connections and variations in language that arise from both social dynamics and intrinsic linguistic factors, expanding its focus to include even the nuances within seemingly homogeneous language forms like literary language. The primary objectives of sociolinguistics focus on how societal changes impact language development and usage (Takhirovna 2021: 417).

Social context significantly shapes our language usage, guiding us in adhering to implicit social rules governing conversation flow, initiation, conclusion, and topic transitions. As we navigate academic, professional, personal, and civic settings, our language adapts to meet the distinct demands and norms of each context. This dynamic interaction between social context and language underscores the adaptive nature of communication and its role in shaping social interactions and identities.

1.2. Culture-specific features and language choices

1.2.1. High-and low-context cultures

In an era of profound globalization, communication styles tend to vary between cultures, which is why it is essential to understand these variations

and their origins. Communication styles act as a double-edged sword in society. On one hand, they can bridge the gap between people by promoting understanding and reducing confusion. On the other hand, they can also highlight social hierarchies and the importance of respect within a culture. Edward T. Hall's (1976) theories of high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) cultures are essential for decoding the complexities of cross-cultural communication. These models help in understanding how cultural backgrounds influence the directness of interpersonal exchanges across different societies (Nishimura et al 2008: 783).

Edward T. Hall categorizes cultural differences in communication based on language and context usage. He distinguishes low-context (LC) communication, which heavily relies on verbal language tools, from high-context (HC) communication, where non-verbal and contextual elements play a significant role. In HC communication, much of the information is contained within the context or the individual's internal understanding, with minimal reliance on explicit messages. On the other hand, LC communication places a strong emphasis on the explicit message to convey information due to the limited use of contextual elements (Hall 1976: p. 79).

Firstly, high-context cultures prioritize indirect communication where the context of the message is crucial for conveying efficient meaning. These cultures heavily rely on nonverbal tools, shared histories, customs and subtle details like body language and facial expressions to communicate, with verbal communication playing a secondary role. At the same time, relationships between individuals significantly impact HC interactions, requiring the interpretation of implicit messages and shared context for understanding (Nishimura et al 2008: 785).

HC communication styles are prevalent in cultures where people have close connections over a long period. In such settings, many things are left unsaid, letting the culture explain itself (Usunier & Roulin 2010: 14). This style is commonly found in Asian, Arab, and Latin American cultures, drawing attention to indirect communication, social norms, and traditions deeply ingrained in language and cultural practices, characterized by formalities and respect (Nishimura et al 2008: 785).

Communication in high-context cultures is based on several theoretical communicational models that could explain these the features of relational harmony within such cultures:

- Erving Goffman's concept of "presentation of self" explains how individuals in HC cultures strategically manage their non-verbal tools (facial expressions, gestures, posture) to shape perceptions and convey meaning beyond spoken words (Goffman 1959: 14–15). These non-verbal elements become essential for decoding the messages underlying communication.

- HC cultures often demonstrate a strong relation to H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle, which emphasizes indirectness and conversational implications. Meaning is frequently conveyed through what is left unsaid, requiring listeners to infer the speaker's intent based on the shared context and background knowledge. This necessitates a high degree of cultural sensitivity and an understanding of implicit communication styles (Grice 1975: 44).

- Speech Act Theory, particularly the concept of perlocutionary acts, highlights that in HC cultures, the intent behind speech (illocutionary acts) often overshadows the literal meaning of words. Communication intends to strengthen social bonds and maintain group harmony by conveying precise information. Words become more flexible tools within the broader context of the relationship, with a focus on achieving desired social outcomes (Austin 1962: 144–146).

On the other hand, low-context cultures feature more direct and explicit communication, where the meaning is derived mostly from oral or written communication rather than contextual details. These cultures value clear, efficient, and straightforward exchanges of information (Wei & Zhang 2014: 603).

Communication in LC cultures often follows a formal structure, underlying clarity and preventing misunderstandings. This formality extends to societal and organizational structures, where rules and procedures are explicitly defined and adhered to. Messages in LC cultures are conveyed to be universally understandable, targeting a broad audience with the assumption of limited shared background knowledge among participants, enhancing inclusivity and accessibility (Gao 2019: 319). LC communication styles dominate in cultures where people tend to have many connections but of shorter duration. According to Hall and some scholars Italy, England, France, the United States, Scandinavia, and Germany are considered to have low-context communication styles (Usunier & Roulin 2010: 9).

Several theoretical frameworks offer insights into the communication patterns characteristic of low-context cultures:

- Speech Act Theory, particularly the distinction between illocutionary acts (the act of saying something) and perlocutionary acts (the intended effect of saying something) developed by J.L. Austin and further elaborated by John Searle, provides valuable insights into LC communication. These cultures prioritise the elocutionary dimension, where the explicit content of speech is expected to carry the majority of the communicative burden. This minimizes reliance on contextual or non-verbal signs to infer speaker intentions or hidden meanings, reflecting a preference for directness and precision in communication (Mabaquiao 2018: 1-3).

- H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle points out that participants in a conversation naturally strive to facilitate comprehension (Grice 1975: 50). This principle is operated through four maxims: quantity (providing sufficient information), quality (ensuring truthfulness), relation (maintaining relevance), and manner (avoiding ambiguity). In LC cultures, communication becomes an environment where explicitness and logical coherence are valued over implied or inferred meanings. (Levinson 1983: 100–110)

- Basil Bernstein's Code Elaboration Theory differentiates between "elaborated" and "restricted" codes within linguistic communities (Bernstein 2004: 465–470). LC cultures typically utilize elaborated codes, marked by explicitness, formality, and a focus on precise language chosen to minimize ambiguity. This approach facilitates clear communication and is designed to be universally accessible, thus reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings (van Dijk 1997: 65). The use of elaborated codes is especially prevalent in formal education and professional settings within LC cultures, where clear and detailed explication of concepts is prioritized to ensure comprehension across diverse groups (Bernstein 2004: 465–470).

Understanding these cultural contexts is essential when considering how power distance beliefs might interact differently across cultures. For instance, in high-context cultures, where indirect communication is prevalent, power distance might further complicate communication because subordinates may be even less likely to express disagreement or offer suggestions directly to superiors. In contrast, in low-context cultures, even with high power distance, communication might still be more direct and thus slightly less inhibited by hierarchical structures.

1.2.2. Power distance

Building on our understanding of low and high-context cultures, Geert Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions offers valuable insights into how power distance influences language use and communication styles across these cultural contexts. This concept, which refers to the extent to which a society accepts the unequal distribution of power, plays a crucial role in shaping communicative interactions (Hofstede 1984: 71–72).

Initially introduced by Dutch social psychologist Mauk Mulder, and later refined by Geert Hofstede, power distance is depicted as the degree to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Mulder et al 1971: 19-41). Power distance belief describes a cultural and personal outlook on how power is distributed within a society or an organization (Song & Feng 2023).

In examining how power distance influences language use, scholars can observe distinct practices in high versus low power distance cultures. High power distance cultures place a strong emphasis on formality and deference towards authority figures. This is reflected in their language use, where elaborate titles such as "Mr.", "Dr.", or "Director" are employed, often paired with culturally specific honorifics when addressing superiors (Kramsch 1998: 98–99). Moreover, individuals in these cultures may avoid directly contradicting superiors, instead opting for indirect communication strategies. These strategies include the use of euphemisms, softening criticism, or conveying messages through metaphors to express disagreement or requests (Gu 2006: 1208).

Conversely, in low power distance cultures, communication is characterized by a more egalitarian and informal approach. This is evident in the minimal use of titles, with individuals frequently addressing each other by

first names, irrespective of hierarchical positions (Daniels & Greguras 2014: 1205). Furthermore, there is a marked tendency for direct communication and assertiveness, where individuals feel at ease expressing their opinions and requests straightforwardly, even to those in superior positions (Zhang, 2023: 31).

In high power distance cultures, conversational dynamics demonstrate a clear deference to authority, where superiors typically dominate discussions. Subordinates may be reluctant to interrupt or speak out of turn, and their speech patterns often adopt a more formal and deliberate tone, reflecting the hierarchical structure of the society (Khatri 2009: 2-3). This contrasts with low power distance cultures, where conversations are generally more interactive. In such environments, frequent interruptions and overlapping speech are normalized, and speech patterns tend to be faster-paced and less formal, promoting an atmosphere of equality and open exchange (Holler 2016: 42).

High power distance cultures often display specific patterns in the use of deictic expressions, which are terms that establish spatial or social relationships (Fillmore 2014: 123-125). Languages such as Japanese and Korean utilize various verb forms and pronouns that reflect the hierarchical relationships among the speaker, listener, and the subjects discussed. These linguistic elements underline social stratification and accentuate the power structures within interactions (Vlegels 2018: 50).

Regarding speech acts, as introduced by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1969), these cultures often prioritize maintaining social harmony and showing respect for authority figures (Austin 1962: 144–146) (Searle 1969: 23). This preference manifests in the use of indirect communication tactics. Individuals may employ euphemisms, hedging phrases like "perhaps" or "it might be possible," or suggestive language to softly convey disagreement or

make requests, thereby avoiding confrontation or offence to those in authority (Gu 2006: 1208). In contrast, cultures with low power distance typically engage in more straightforward speech acts, directly expressing requests and disagreements.

Code-switching, which involves alternating between languages or dialects within a single conversation, can also be affected by power distance. In multilingual settings with pronounced power hierarchies, individuals may switch to a more formal language style or a completely different language when speaking to higher-ups, thereby leading to the existing social hierarchy. Therefore, in societies with low power distance, there is generally less frequent code-switching in daily interactions (Stell & Kofi Yakpo 2015: 215).

Furthermore, the role of non-verbal communication varies significantly between high and low-power distance cultures. In high power distance settings, non-verbal cues play a crucial role in maintaining the established social order. Practices such as bowing, specific etiquette around eye contact, and the careful management of physical space are common, serving to reinforce the social hierarchy and the deference expected towards authority figures (Mui et al 2013: 21). On the contrary, non-verbal communication tends to be more relaxed in low power distance cultures. There is less emphasis on stringent rules regarding eye contact or the regulation of physical space, reflecting a more informal and egalitarian approach to interpersonal interactions (Samovar et al 2017: 323).

Overall, Hofstede's concept of power distance put the light on how language use varies across cultures. High power distance cultures exhibit formality and deference towards superiors through elaborate titles, honorifics, and indirect communication strategies (euphemisms, hedging) to maintain social harmony. On the other hand, low power distance cultures promote

egalitarianism via informal language (minimal titles, first names) and direct communication, nurturing a more interactive conversational style. Recognizing these linguistic manifestations of power distance is essential for effective cross-cultural communication.

1.3. Politeness and its cultural specificity

Even though power distance exists between interlocutors, both parties usually use politeness strategies to achieve a common goal: smooth and efficient communication. Politeness is a complex system of communication strategies which functions as a regulator of conversational behaviour that is considered socially appropriate and aims for harmony, effectiveness, and conflict avoidance. From a linguistic perspective, especially pragmalinguistics, politeness is defined as a language category, shaped by the structure of the communicative act (Bolotnikova 2021: 2-4).

A lot of linguists argue that politeness strategies are crucial for upholding social order and are considered essential for enabling human cooperation (Brown 2015: 326-330). The idea that politeness helps in social indexing implies that societal norms dictate what constitutes polite behaviour, and these norms change depending on the social status of the speaker compared to the listener (Sadeghoghli & Niroomand 2016: 28-29).

According to Matthews the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics, the concept of "face" is one of the most significant in understanding politeness (Matthews 2014: 235). As was stated by Brown and Levinson, face is defined as 'the public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for themselves (Brown & Levinson 1987: 287). Essentially, "face" represents an individual's social status and is crucial in polite interactions. Therefore, the fundamental approach to politeness involves minimizing actions that threaten this social standing, known as the negative face, while improving the positive

face, which contributes to an individual's favourable image. Positive face relates to an individual's wish to receive approval and appreciation from others, as well as their desire to belong to a group. Negative face, on the other hand, pertains to an individual's need for independence and freedom from impositions by others. This theory demonstrates the dynamics of social behaviour, where individuals simultaneously strive for both community inclusion and personal autonomy (Borris & Zecho 2018: 33).

Yule describes that when an individual demonstrates respect by recognizing the significance of another's troubles or worries or offers an apology for disruption or inconvenience, they are performing an act that protects the person's negative face, termed as negative politeness. In contrast, when someone tries to express equality, points out that both participants have similar objectives, and points out a shared goal, the act is directed towards enhancing the person's positive face, known as positive politeness (Yule, 1996: 61–62).

According to Watts, politeness strategies are designed to boost the listener's positive face and to prevent encroachment on the listener's autonomy and freedom from interference. The participant should select suitable strategies to reduce any threats to face that might arise during social interactions (Watts 2003: 85). Politeness strategies significantly shape the way speech acts are constructed across different cultures. In cultures with high power distance, as characterized by Hofstede, it is crucial to show respect to authority figures (Hofstede 1984: 71–72). This respect is manifested through various linguistic elements, including:

- Subtle Requests: Using subtle language for requests ("Perhaps you could...?" instead of "Do this") helps to reduce threats to the negative face (desire for autonomy) of those in higher positions (Brown & Levinson 1987: 291)

- Formal Titles: Employing formal titles such as "Mr." or "Dr." upholds the social hierarchy and conveys respect (Al-Khawaldeh et al 2023).

- Polished Language: The use of polished, formal language corresponds with the expected level of formality in interactions with higher-ups in societies with pronounced power distance (Gunputsing 2021: 20).

On the other hand, in low power distance cultures there is a preference for more direct and egalitarian communication styles:

- In low power distance cultures, commonly accepted are direct requests, demonstrating the minimal emphasis on rigid social hierarchies (Staszkievicz 2018: 7-8). This method is regarded as both efficient and considerate of the recipient's time. Furthermore, this approach is consistent with the concept of negative politeness as described by Brown & Levinson (1987), which focuses on minimizing impositions on others. A direct request respects the addressee's autonomy by recognizing their capacity to decide independently (Brown & Levinson 1987: 288).

- Informality dominates in low power distance cultures underscoring a core value of equality (Gudykunst & Young Yun Kim 1997: 28). In low power distance cultures, people commonly address each other by first names, regardless of age or position, which helps create a friendly environment. Contractions and slang are also more prevalent in professional settings compared to high power distance cultures, lending to a more relaxed communication style. Additionally, the overall tone in communication is informal and conversational, creating open dialogue and encouraging active participation. These practices align with the positive politeness strategies that Brown & Levinson (1987) described, which are focused on building social connections and gaining approval. An informal communication approach fosters a sense of openness to personal interaction, thereby contributing to the development of team cohesion (Brown & Levinson 1987: 292).

Overall, politeness is a crucial aspect of communication, especially in maintaining social order and cooperation. The concept of "face" is central, referring to an individual's social standing and desire for both respect (positive face) and autonomy (negative face). Politeness strategies are used to protect both aspects of the interlocutors' face.

1.4. Communication Accommodation Theory and its relevance to social status

As we have acknowledged, social status, which is seen as a key element of social identity, significantly influences how individuals accommodate their communication in various settings. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), introduced by Giles (1973), investigates the phenomenon of speech convergence during interaction. It posits that individuals dynamically modify their communication behaviours to align with their conversation partners. These adjustments can reflect either self-identity or social group affiliation. The theory delves into the motivations behind such convergence, exploring the "why," "how," and "when" of these communicative adaptations. Notably, CAT emphasizes the dual functions served by these adjustments: facilitating cognitive understanding (message clarity) and managing effective social distance (relationship closeness) (Giles 2016).

These adjustments reflect not just our identities but also the social identities we bring to the interaction, shaped by factors like age, gender, ethnicity, and most importantly for this paper, social status (Giles & Powesland, 1997: 43).

According to Giles and Street (1982), communication accommodation serves as a tool for interlocutors to cultivate a positive social image and gain approval from their interaction partners. This adjustment comes in two main forms: convergence and divergence (Usera, 2021).

Convergence (accentuating verbal and nonverbal similarities) describes the tendency to become more similar to the other person's communication style. People might adopt their vocabulary, speech patterns (tone, accent, pitch), or even nonverbal cues (posture, gestures) to build rapport, gain approval, or reduce perceived social distance (Perreault & Bourhis 1998:56).

On the other hand, divergence (accentuating verbal and nonverbal differences) refers to intentionally or unintentionally moving away from the other person's communication style. This could involve using more complex vocabulary, speaking formally when the other person is casual, or even exaggerating regional accents or slang to establish group identity or assert dominance (Zhang & Giles 2018: 5). While divergence might create a sense of distance between interlocutors (people they're talking to), it also serves as an identification strategy. By diverging, speakers can signal their belonging to a specific group outside the immediate interaction (Giles et al 2010: 24). This phenomenon can be particularly relevant for multilingual speakers who hold their heritage language in high esteem. Additionally, divergence can serve as a strategic tool for shaping interlocutors' perceptions (Giles 1997: 232-239).

People with lower social status often exhibit convergence towards the communication style of those with higher status. This can be seen as a way to build rapport, gain approval, or reduce the perceived social distance between them (Zhang & Giles 2018: 5). By mirroring the communication style of someone with higher status, individuals appear more competent or worthy of approval. According to Cogo & Dewey (2006), communication convergence serves a dual purpose (Cogo & Dewey 2006: 59). Firstly, it enhances communicative efficiency, ensuring the speaker's message is readily understood by the listener. Secondly, it functions as a social tool to signal alignment, cooperation, and a desire for approval and support. However, the authors acknowledge potential drawbacks associated with convergence,

including a sense of identity loss or diminished connection to one's social group (Lemetyinen, 2023).

CAT has been extensively researched and applied in various contexts, demonstrating its significance in understanding human communication dynamics. Communication Accommodation Theory is one way to explain how people of different cultures are constantly adapting their communication styles either in converging, diverging, or over-accommodating styles to people in multiple contexts.

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) explains how we adjust our communication style (convergence) to align with others, reflecting self-identity or social groups. These adjustments aim for better understanding and managing social distance. CAT highlights the influence of social identity, especially social status, on an individual's communication across different settings.

CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 examines the complex interconnection between social status and linguistic behaviour, emphasizing the significant role of socioeconomic factors, cultural backgrounds, and individual identities in shaping communication. The chapter is focused on various linguistic phenomena such as speech patterns, code-switching, and distinct communication styles prevalent in high-context and low-context cultures. These aspects were explored through the perception of landmark sociolinguistic theories highlighting how language is a marker and a constructor of social hierarchies.

Labov's pioneering work revealed systematic variations in language use across social classes. Labov's research, primarily conducted on Manhattan's Lower East Side, established a methodology for correlating linguistic variations with socio-economic factors like occupation, education, and income.

Chapter 1 also explored Edward T. Hall's concept of high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communication styles. HC cultures rely heavily on nonverbal cues, while LC cultures favour explicit verbal communication. This distinction is key to understanding cultural influences on communication style.

Building on Hofstede's concept of power distance, the chapter examines how cultures that accept unequal power distribution (high power distance) often have distinct communication styles, showing respect for authority and careful management of interactions.

Finally, the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) introduced by Howard Giles explains how individuals adjust their speech to either converge with or diverge from their conversational partners' communication styles. Such adjustments are motivated by a desire to effectively manage social identity and interpersonal relationships.

2. VERBAL MARKERS OF SOCIAL STATUS IN MODERN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

2.1. Cultural and social contrast in "The Farewell"

To analyse verbal markers of social status in modern cross-cultural communication was chosen "The Farewell" (2019), an American comedy-drama directed by Lulu Wang that combines American and Chinese elements, reflecting the bicultural themes in the family relationship at the core of its narrative.

The film highlights the stark cultural and social contrasts between Eastern and Western perspectives. At the centre of "The Farewell" is a conflict between two completely different communication styles. Raised in the West, Billi, the granddaughter, values direct communication and open access to information, though her family attempts to protect Nai Nai, the grandmother, from her terminal cancer diagnosis. This divergence also manifests in family relationships, where the film shows a strong collectivist culture within the Chinese family. They prioritize group needs over individual desires, as shown by the fake wedding arranged to visit Nai Nai without warning her.

In contrast, Billi, who grew up valuing individual autonomy, struggles with this familial approach. Cultural differences also emerge in how characters express care. Nai Nai frequently shows her affection by remarking on Billi's eating and dressing habits, a traditional Chinese way of expressing care. This method can appear direct and intrusive, as it touches upon personal aspects of Billi's life. Conversely, Billi's style is openly confrontational, the feature of a straightforward American mode of communication. Views on illness and death differ significantly; the family's choice not to inform Nai Nai about her cancer diagnosis stems from a belief prevalent in many Eastern cultures that the mental state can profoundly affect physical health. This notion is similarly recognized in Western psychological science and forms a core principle of self-

help literature in popular psychology. This belief sharply contrasts with Western norms that emphasize patient autonomy and informed consent. Moreover, "The Farewell" examines the tension between tradition and modernity. Billi, embodying the modern, globalized view, finds herself conflicted between her family's deep-rooted traditions and her connection to them.

The film offers a glance at the communication styles within families, showing how characters interact to reveal differences in respect for authority (power distance), the explicitness of communication (context levels), adjustments in speech to accommodate others (accommodation patterns), and the methods of expressing politeness.

2.1.1. Verbalization of power distance in "The Farewell"

In "The Farewell," power distance is portrayed through various aspects of communication between characters.

The first and most obvious factor to influence the power distance is formal and informal address in communication:

- Nai Nai. Hi!" (Billy to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:02:09].
- I'm not wearing earrings, Nai Nai!" (Billy to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:02:44].
- Hey, what's that sound? Nai Nai, where are you?" (Billy to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:02:50].
- I love you Nai Nai..." (Billy to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:08:30].
- Nai Nai... We don't need a big wedding banquet." (Hao Hao to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:19:00].

"Nai Nai" translates to "grandmother" in English, which reflects the deep-seated cultural respect for elders prevalent in Chinese society. The consistent use of her title "Nai Nai" by all family members underscores her authoritative and cherished status within the family. Even though the address

Nai Nai might appear informal to Western audiences, it is a formal and respectful way of addressing one's grandmother in Chinese culture

- Little Nai Nai... " (Billy to Little Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:16:57].

The use of the adjective "Little" before "Nai Nai" is a verbal recognition of a hierarchical structure within the family. It signifies that she is below the main "Nai Nai" in the family hierarchy, in terms of age, wisdom and authority.

- It hurts! Gu Gu, you said it was a massage." (Billy to Gu Gu) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:34:44].
- Gu Gu... Don't you think we should tell Nai Nai?" (Billy to Gu Gu) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:34:38].

"Gu Gu" translates to "aunt" on the father's side in Chinese. This title, while familial also implies a relationship hierarchy that Billi respects. It is a recognition of the elder status of her aunt within the family hierarchy, in line with the high power distance characteristics of Chinese culture despite Billy's Western upbringing.

- OK, auntie, I'll figure it out. Just get over there and we'll meet you!" (Uncle Haibin to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:45:30].
- Auntie, you've spent so long taking care of your sister." (Jian to Little Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:17:05].

On the one hand, the usage of "Auntie" signals higher status of the addressee within the family, reflecting respect and authority that are characteristic of high power distance cultures. On the other hand, "auntie", in contrast to "aunt", is used broadly to refer to any older female figure in one's life who provides support. Additionally, "auntie" is used to portray a warm and close relationship, usually in casual conversations.

- Ma, let the man smoke." (Uncle Haibin to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:57:23].
- Ma, I already told you, Aiko's not pregnant." Auntie Ling to Nai Nai) [The

Farewell, 2019, 00:29:56].

- Ma, you can't just disappear without telling any of us!" (Haiyan to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:46:40].
- Ma, there will be plenty of alcohol at the wedding." (Haiyan to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:52:43].
- Ma, you are the best mother in the entire world. Thank you, Ma." (Uncle Haibin to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:11:30].
- Ma, don't come down!" (Haiyan to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:27:55].
- Ma, go upstairs!" (Haiyan to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:28:52].

"Ma", short for mother, is an informal way of addressing one's mother or grandmother in many cultures, including Chinese. The term "Ma" used to address Nai Nai shows the deep respect and concern for her well-being, reflecting a high power distance culture where elders are revered and protected. Additionally, her involvement in family decisions emphasizes her authority and vital role, illustrating the cultural norm of elders as key decision-makers, which is characteristic of high power distance settings.

- OK, Sis. Let's go."(Little Nai Nai to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:04:57].
- Go home, Sis." (Little Nai Nai to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:44:28].
- Will you take one with my camera too? Sis, where is it?" (Little Nai Nai to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:21:54].

Among siblings, the use of "Sis", shortening of "sister", indicates a more equal relationship where power distance is reduced. This contrasts with the formal modes of address reserved for elders within the family, such as previously described "Nai Nai". This shift is often more pronounced in families exposed to lower power distance cultures, such as those influenced by Western cultures.

Analyzing power distance in "The Farewell", one cannot but point out that the issue of Directness and Indirectness is depicted through the contrast in communication. Billi, who represents a low power distance culture, uses direct communication, especially in confrontational or critical communicative situations.

BILLI "What? I just spoke to her, she didn't say anything..."

JIAN "She doesn't know yet."

BILLI "How long does she have?"

JIAN "Doctor says three months, but you never know. Could be faster."

BILLI "I need to call her..."

HAIYAN "No, Billi..."

BILLI "I need to see her!" [The Farewell, 2019, 00:11:39].

Billi directly confronts her family about Nai Nai's health condition when she finds out the truth. Billi employs direct questions "What?", "How long...?" which are typical of direct communication styles. Direct questions can be seen as confrontational in high power distance. In sentences "I need to call her...", "I need to see her!" the modal verb "need" is used to express necessity and urgency. In linguistic terms, "need" serves as a modal verb that conveys a meaning of essential requirement rather than a desire. In this situation, Billi's style reduces the power distance between herself and her elders by directly addressing her needs and opposing the family's secretive approach when Haiyan says, "No, Billi..."

The following conversation between Billi and Doctor Song in "The Farewell" portrays a significant cultural contrast in the perception and communication practices related to power distance:

BILLI "Don't you think it's wrong to lie?"

DOCTOR SONG "It's not really a lie if it's meant for good."

BILLI "It's still a lie."

DOCTOR SONG "It's a good lie." [The Farewell, 2019, 00:49:18].

Analyzing the conversation from a power distance perspective, "Don't you think it's wrong to lie?" is an interrogative used as a rhetorical device, suggesting she expects agreement or wants to provoke thought, corresponding with confrontational norms of low power distance cultures. Doctor Song's responses are modulated by mitigating language ("not really a lie", "good lie"), which is a pragmatic strategy to maintain harmony and reduce direct conflict, common in high power distance cultures.

In "Farewell", elders and people in authority tend to control the conversation, directing the actions and decisions of others.

- Stop it! Everything's already booked and I've sent out invitations last week!" (Nai Nai to everybody) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:19:20].

Nai Nai's commanding use of the imperative "Stop it!" sets a decisive tone, asserting her authority in the conversation. Her use of verbs in passive and perfect aspect forms like "is already booked" and "have sent out" indicates that decisions have been made, highlighting her higher proactive role.

- OK, listen to me all of you. I know everyone's excited to see me, but let's not forget why we're all here." (Nai Nai to everybody) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:29:43].

Nai Nai's directive statement during the wedding shows her role as a commanding elder. "OK, listen to me all of you" is a direct, authoritative imperative that captures her family's attention. She acknowledges the family's excitement with "I know everyone's excited to see me," which smoothly transitions into her control of the conversation. Her statements demonstrate the respect and authority she commands as the elder matriarch in a high power distance culture.

- NAI NAI It's not right! I ordered meal set one! When I booked the wedding, you guys told me meal set one would come with lobster. That's what you said. Now you act like you don't know anything about it?"

WEDDING COORDINATOR I really don't know anything about that. I was told it's crab, but I can check with the chef."

NAI NAI What kind of scam is this? It's three days before the wedding, we already paid a deposit and you make this kind of a change without telling us!" [The Farewell, 2019, 00:32:11].

Nai Nai's dialogue with the wedding coordinator illustrates the dynamics of power distance through direct, authoritative communication. Nai Nai uses rhetorical questions like "Now you act like you don't know anything about it?" with rhetorical question such as "What kind of scam is this?" to intensify the seriousness of her complaint. The informality of the address "you guys" breaks from the formal norms usually expected in high power distance interactions, emphasizing the urgency of the situation.

In "The Farewell," the film explores the dynamics of power distance within a Chinese family, determined by age-related social status and communicated through kinship terms. Authority is exercised by elders such as Nai Nai, who assert control through direct commands and by adopting a composed demeanour—methods that distinctly highlight their dominance. It is important to note that the way these elders address younger family members, though commanding, does not include the respectful kinship terms that the younger members use toward the elders, thereby highlighting a significant hierarchical divide. On the contrary, Billi's approach, characterized by directness and emotional expressiveness, contrasts with these traditional norms, challenging the customary respect for established hierarchical

structures.

2.1.2. Verbalization of high-low context in "The Farewell"

In the film "The Farewell," the verbalization of high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communication styles is depicted through the interactions between the characters, mostly between Billi and her other family members.

Firstly, the film describes the high-context (HC) communication within the family relationship, particularly in their decision to keep Nai Nai's terminal illness a secret

- Chinese people have a saying. When people get cancer, they die... it's not the cancer that kills them. It's the fear." (Jian to Billy) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:12:14].

In "The Farewell," the decision to keep Nai Nai's illness a secret underscores the high-context (HC) communication style that reflects the social status and authority of the family elders. Jian's indirect statement about cancer and fear represents the elder's preference to protect and maintain emotional harmony, representing their higher social status and the collectivist culture's emphasis on indirect communication. In contrast, Billi's direct question, "OK, when were you guys gonna tell me this?" highlights her lower status and her inclination towards low-context (LC) communication, which values directness and individual rights to information.

- In America, you think one's life belongs to oneself. But that's the difference between the East and the West. In the East, your life is part of a whole. Family. Society." (Haiyan to Billy) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:02:42].

Haiyan's statement highlights the role of social status in high-context (HC) communication cultures by contrasting Eastern collective norms with Western individualism. His use of generalizations ("In America," "In the East")

highlights the shared knowledge and collective identity central to HC communication, where social status is defined within the family and societal context. The phrase "Family. Society." emphasizes the preference of collective needs over individual desires, illustrating how personal actions and communications in the East are guided by broader communal responsibilities.

- We don't have to tell her. We have to make sure she's happy. It's our duty to carry this emotional burden for her." (Little Nai Nai to Billy) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:03:24].

Little Nai Nai's dialogue with Billi highlights the influence of social status within high-context (HC) communication cultures. Using phrases like "We have to" and "It's our duty," she emphasizes the family's collective responsibility, reflecting the authority of elders in guiding family decisions. This authoritative style is typical in HC communications, where elders enforce communal obligations over individual desires. The focus on "emotional burden" and ensuring happiness further underscores the importance of group harmony and the role of higher-status family members in maintaining it.

Secondly, Billi's internal conflict is a key part of the "Farewell". She is uncertain whether to follow LC communication context to be honest and transparent with Nai Nai about her illness or respect her family's way of HC communicating context, which relies heavily on implied meaning and unspoken understanding.

- JIAN You don't know your grandma as well as you think you do. Don't you know, she loves to boss everyone around! Make her feel important and in control.

BILLI Mom...

JIAN I don't have issues with her. She has issues with me!

BILLI She's dying! Can't you be a little more sensitive?" [The Farewell, 2019, 00:54:44].

In this dialogue Jian's rhetorical question, "Don't you know, she loves to boss everyone around?" serves not as an inquiry expecting an answer but as a method to convince Billi to accept an image accepted by all the family members. Billi's interjection ("Mom...") is a contradiction, a linguistic device used in LC communication to signal disagreement or emotional discomfort. Billi's request "Can't you be a little more sensitive?" represents a direct request, characteristic of low-context (LC) communication. Jian instructs Billi on how to deal with Nai Nai, emphasizing the significance of social status within high-context (HC) communication cultures. Jian advises Billi to validate Nai Nai's matriarchal status by making her feel valued and in charge. Her rhetorical question about Nai Nai's controlling behavior points to a shared understanding within the family. On the other hand, Billi's direct request for greater sensitivity indicates her preference for low-context (LC) communication. This conversation reflects the conflict between maintaining conventional social roles and adopting more straightforward, individualized communication methods.

In "The Farewell," the film effectively contrasts high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communication styles within Billi's family. The family's decision to withhold the truth about Nai Nai's illness exemplifies HC communication, emphasizing elders' authority and the collective priority of maintaining emotional harmony. In contrast, Billi's direct and transparent approach shows her inclination towards LC communication. This tension between traditional Eastern values and Billi's Westernized perspective illustrates the broader challenges of balancing familial obligations with individual autonomy in a globalized context.

2.1.3. Accommodation patterns used in "The Farewell"

In applying Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to the communicative situations within "The Farewell", it is necessary to analyze examples of convergence and divergence in communication styles among characters. This analysis helps to describe how individuals adjust their communicative strategies to either align or differentiate themselves from their interlocutors, influenced by various socio-cultural and personal factors.

In "The Farewell," Billi's cultural flexibility and sensitivity in her interactions with Nai Nai offer examples of convergence in communication, which serve to reduce social and cultural distances.

- Nai Nai: Is it cold there? Are you wearing enough? Cold travels through the head! Are you wearing a hat?

Billi: I am." (though she is not actually wearing a hat on the screen) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:02:28].

By confirming "I am" in response to Nai Nai's question about whether she is wearing a hat—despite the visual evidence to the contrary—Billi creates her response to meet Nai Nai's expectations. This linguistic adjustment is an act to sustain social harmony and affirm Nai Nai's respected status. Therefore, Billi's reply represents a balance of respecting elder authority, adhering to cultural norms, and preserving family cohesion through careful verbal conformity.

- Nai Nai: You have to be careful. I read that in New York there are men who steal your earrings. They rip them out! And then you have to go to the hospital to get your ears stitched up!

Billi: I'm not wearing earrings, Nai Nai!" [The Farewell, 2019, 00:02:45].

In the dialogue from "The Farewell," Nai Nai uses vivid, emotionally coloured language “get your ears stitched up”, “rip them out” to express her concern for Billi's safety. It serves as a reflection of her role as a protective elder with high social status within the family. Billi's direct response, "I'm not wearing earrings, Nai Nai," addresses Nai Nai's concern. This approach reassures Nai Nai, showing respect for her elder status while also asserting Billi's autonomy and capability to manage her own safety.

- Billy: I didn't get the grant.

Nai Nai: Really? You just heard?

Billy: Last week. I didn't tell you because... I didn't want you to worry."
[The Farewell, 2019, 01:26:39].

In this communicative situation, Billi uses linguistic convergence strategies to manage the emotional impact on her grandmother. The use of an aposiopesis in her explanation to Nai Nai "I didn't tell you because..." adds a pause that enhances the sincerity of her intent. By choosing to withhold information to avoid causing worry, Billi respects and upholds the traditional social order where younger family members protect the emotional well-being of their elders.

There are also instances of divergence, which according to CAT, occurs when individuals emphasize differences in their speech and behavior to distinguish themselves from their interlocutors.

- Street Canvasser: Hi! Do you have a minute to save the polar bears? Billi: I really wanna say something snarky, but I used to have your job. Street Canvasser: So you know how important it is to support us!

Billy: I know your job sucks." [The Farewell, 2019, 00:03:09].

In the dialogue between Billi and the street canvasser, divergence in communication is evident through several linguistic aspects. The canvasser's positive framing with a question ("So you know") aimed at invoking urgency and moral responsibility contrasts sharply with Billi's cynical response ("I know your job sucks"), where she recalls her past experience and dismisses the job as unpleasant. Moreover, the contrast in their communication reflects their social statuses. Billi's response not only diverges from the canvasser's enthusiastic approach but also highlights her higher social position, reflecting how past roles can influence and assert authority in present interactions.

- Jian: Why you not save? You should change your expensive lifestyle!

Billi: Seriously, Mom. If you're gonna give me shit every time I come home, I won't come back anymore!

Jian: Lower your voice. Dad's sleeping!

Billi: It's six o'clock. What's wrong with him?" [The Farewell, 2019, 00:09:23].

In this scene from "The Farewell," the conversation between Jian and Billi illustrates the impact of their social statuses within the family. Jian, the mother, asserts her authority with direct criticism and commands, reflecting her role as the parental figure concerned with Billi's lifestyle. In contrast, Billi's informal and confrontational response ("give me shit") shows her resistance to this parental authority, highlighting her desire for independence.

- Uncle Haibin: Nai Nai is very sick, you know?

Billi: I know.

Uncle Haibin: Nai Nai herself doesn't know. We're not going to tell her.

Billi: I know. Dad told me.

Uncle Haibin: She doesn't have long left. We got several opinions already. I also spoke to a doctor in Japan. A cancer specialist.

Billi: I know! Dad already told me!" [The Farewell, 2019, 00:21:30].

In the dialogue from "The Farewell," Uncle Haibin and Billi's conversation highlights their different social roles within the family. Uncle Haibin, in a traditional elder role, conveys serious information about Nai Nai's health. In contrast, Billi's brief, repetitive responses, "I know! Dad already told me," reflect her lower and somehow childish position, expressing her frustration with the family's secretive handling of the situation. This interaction represents the contrast between Uncle Haibin's adherence to Chinese cultural norms of protecting elders and Billi's preference for transparency, underscoring their distinct roles and perspectives within the family dynamics.

In "The Farewell," Elder family members like Nai Nai and Uncle Haibin occupy authoritative roles and use direct communication to manage and protect the family, often withholding sensitive information to maintain harmony. In contrast, Billi, who occupies a lower social status within the family hierarchy, often diverges in her responses, seeking transparency and expressing frustration towards the traditional handling of family troubles. These dynamics illustrate how social status shapes the communication situations and emotional engagements within the family.

2.1.4. Politeness strategies employed in "The Farewell"

In "The Farewell" the character of Nai Nai who is in the superior position

uses different politeness strategies influenced by her cultural norms and social status, which help keep social harmony especially in the family dynamics.

Positive politeness strategies from "The Farewell", illustrate how the family strives to maintain a positive relationship with each other:

- You see... my granddaughter is very strong. Independent. Not someone who just follows everyone else." (Nai Nai to Billi) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:18:30].

This complimentary comment by Nai Nai strengthens Billi's positive self-image "very strong", "Independent" and their emotional connection. By affirming Billi's qualities, Nai Nai subtly conveys the expectations she has for her granddaughter. This not only boosts Billi's self-esteem but also encourages her to embody the values that her grandmother holds in high regard. This use of positive politeness reinforces the social hierarchy, highlighting the roles of the one in superior position who gives approval and the inferior who accepts it.

- Don't be ridiculous! You guys came back home to get married. We must have a proper wedding banquet. (Nai Nai to the family during the wedding planning) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:19:11].

Nai Nai's insistence on a traditional wedding banquet highlights her role as the family matriarch, rooted in Chinese cultural norms. Her authoritative statements ("Don't be ridiculous! We must have") serves both to reinforce her high social status and ensure the family aligns societal expectations, maintaining their honor and upholding traditional values crucial in high-context cultures.

- Is it cold there? Are you wearing enough? Cold travels through the head! Are you wearing a hat?"(Nai Nai to Billi) [The Farewell, 2019,

00:02:28].

This dialogue is a typical example of a caring act in politeness theory, which is a form of positive politeness. By asking questions ("Is it cold there? Are you wearing enough?") Nai Nai is not just making small talk with Billi but shows her deep care and concern. Nai Nai's questions to Billi about her well-being are not just caring inquiries but also reflect her high social status as the family matriarch. These questions fulfill her responsibilities to ensure the welfare of family members, a role expected of someone in her position.

- Billi! You must be starving. I'm making your favorite - meat pies! It's your favorite, right? I remember it's your favorite." (Nai Nai to Billi) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:17:02].

When Nai Nai emphasizes that she is preparing Billi's favorite meat pies and repeatedly affirms her knowledge of Billi's preferences, she is performing more than a gesture of care—she is asserting her role as the caregiver and the one who knows and remembers each family member's likes and dislikes.

- "It's been far too long since we've all been united like this" (Nai Nai to everyone) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:18:02].

Likewise, Nai Nai's comment during the dinner about the family's long-overdue reunion employs terms like "united, "we all" which are crucial in the collectivist Chinese culture. This not only strengthens family bonds but also underscores her key role in preserving family unity. Through such remarks, Nai Nai shows her authority and responsibility as the primary caretaker of the family's emotional and social welfare, a position traditionally associated with her elevated status in the family structure. By nostalgically recalling past ("It's been far too long") the statement creates positive emotional response.

To conclude, in "The Farewell," the use of politeness strategies is deeply

connected with the cultural and familial context of the characters, playing a crucial role in navigating the themes of familial bonds. Assuming the role of social status in influencing the use of politeness strategies, we can perform a statistical analysis. Higher social status correlates with a greater use of positive politeness strategies:

- Nai Nai provides 5 instances of positive politeness
- Billi provides 0 instances (as she is the inferior recipient in all the analysed examples)

Therefore, the use of politeness strategies serves multiple social functions, including reinforcing Nai Nai' authoritative role in the family, maintaining family relations, and nurturing emotional bonds.

In "The Farewell," social status and cultural norms are portrayed through characters' communication styles, reflecting the high power distance typical in Chinese culture. Billi's Western upbringing introduces direct communication, challenging traditional indirect and respectful modes, revealing a cultural divergence between Eastern collectivism and Western individualism. The film also contrasts high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communication, with elders maintaining secrets to protect harmony, while Billi seeks transparency. Using Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), it shows how characters adjust their speech to either align with or differentiate from others, illustrating the impact of social status on family communication.

2.2. Comparison between culture-specific features of social status in Western and Eastern communication styles

In "The Farewell," the cultural nuances of social status in communication between Eastern and Western societies are portrayed with significant differences.

Eastern Communication and Social Status:

1. Use of Kinship Terms:

- **Nai Nai** (Grandmother): The frequent use of "Nai Nai" by family members reflects deep respect and acknowledges her authoritative status, typical in high power distance cultures like China.
- *Example*: "Nai Nai, where are you?" (Billi to Nai Nai) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:02:50].
- **"Gu Gu"** (Aunt): Billi's use of "Gu Gu" indicates respect for her aunt's elder status within the family hierarchy.
- *Example*: "It hurts! Gu Gu, you said it was a massage." (Billi to Gu Gu) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:34:44].

2. Indirect Communication:

- The family's decision to keep Nai Nai's illness a secret underscores high-context communication, which values indirectness to maintain respect for elders.
- *Example*: "We don't have to tell her. We have to make sure she's happy. It's our duty to carry this emotional burden for her." (Little Nai Nai to Billi) [The Farewell, 2019, 01:03:24].

3. Elders' Authority:

- Nai Nai's directives and authoritative statements illustrate the high power distance where elders make decisions that are respected without question.
- *Example*: "Stop it! Everything's already booked and I've sent out invitations last week!" (Nai Nai to everybody) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:19:20].

Western Communication and Social Status:

1. Direct Communication and Individualism:

- Billi's direct questioning about Nai Nai's health demonstrates a low power distance and her preference for transparency and individual rights to information.
- *Example:* "What? I just spoke to her, she didn't say anything..." (Billi to Jian) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:11:39].
- Billi directly confronts the family's decision to keep secrets, reflecting Western values of openness.
- *Example:* "I need to call her..." (Billi to Haiyan) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:11:39].

2. Challenging Authority:

- Billi challenges her mother's authority, reflecting a lower power distance where hierarchical boundaries are more flexible.
- *Example:* "Seriously, Mom. If you're gonna give me shit every time I come home, I won't come back anymore!" (Billi to Jian) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:09:23].

3. Explicitness:

- Billi's conversation with Doctor Song highlights the cultural clash in communication styles, with Billi expecting straightforwardness while Doctor Song uses mitigating language.
- *Example:* "Don't you think it's wrong to lie?" (Billi to Doctor Song) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:49:18].
- *Example:* "It's not really a lie if it's meant for good." (Doctor Song to Billi) [The Farewell, 2019, 00:49:18].

In summary, "The Farewell" illustrates the stark contrasts between Eastern and Western communication styles regarding social status. Eastern communication emphasizes hierarchy, indirectness, and collective harmony,

while Western communication values directness, individualism, and transparency. These cultural differences shape family interactions and the way social status is expressed and respected.

CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 2

It was analysed in Chapter 2 that in "The Farewell," the portrayal of power distance and social status is reflected in the characters' communication dynamics, with attention to Eastern and Western cultural nuances. Kinship terms signify respect and hierarchy in the Chinese family, illustrating high power distance. Conversely, Billi's Western upbringing introduces a contrasting dynamic. Her direct communication style, especially in confrontational or critical situations, illustrates lower power distance and a preference for transparency and individual rights.

The film also explores high-context (HC) and low-context (LC) communication styles. The decision to keep Nai Nai's illness a secret exemplifies HC communication, valuing indirectness and harmony. Direct questions in low-context communication such as "How long does she have?" "What?" reflect Billi's lower power distance upbringing in the West, emphasizing transparency and individual rights.

Nai Nai uses an imperative verb "Stop it!" to halt any objections and asserts her decision with past perfect tense verbs "everything's already booked" and "I've sent out invitations" leaving no room for discussion. This authoritative language choice highlights her superior status. As well as Billi's mum employs imperative during their conversation "Lower your voice. Dad's sleeping!" to reflect her role as the superior figure.

Billi's response "I am" to the question about wearing a hat, despite not wearing one, is a clear example of linguistic convergence where she adapts her language to fit the expectations and emotional needs of her grandmother. It demonstrates her lower status and her role as a junior family member accommodating the elder's expectations and emotions.

In conclusion, "The Farewell" illustrates the interconnection of social status and cultural norms in family communication. The film shows how Eastern and Western communication styles differ in expressing respect, authority, and individualism. The use of politeness strategies underscores the role of social status in maintaining family harmony with higher-social status individuals like Nai Nai using positive politeness to reinforce their authority.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The study of social status within modern cross-cultural communication highlights the profound impact of cultural norms, individual identities, and societal structures on linguistic behavior. This research analyses the role that social status plays in shaping communication patterns, highlighting its variation across different cultural contexts and its influence on interpersonal interactions.

In linguistic terms, social status is linked to essential communication elements, including high- and low-context cultures, politeness strategies, power distance, and communication accommodation. These components shape how individuals from various cultural backgrounds interact, both subtly and explicitly. Scholars like William Labov, Geert Hofstede, and Howard Giles have developed frameworks that clarify the relationship between language use and social status.

Language choices and features are shaped by cultural contexts. High-context cultures depend on nonverbal cues and shared understandings, whereas low-context cultures prioritize explicit verbal communication. The prevalence of formal titles, honorifics, and indirect language in high power distance cultures reflects respect for authority and hierarchical structures. Conversely, low power distance cultures favor direct communication and egalitarian interactions.

Politeness strategies are fundamental for sustaining social order and facilitating cooperation. The concept of "face" is crucial to understanding politeness, encompassing the maintenance of both positive and negative face to protect an individual's social status and autonomy. High power distance cultures utilize elaborate titles and indirect communication to show respect,

while low power distance cultures employ direct requests and informal interactions, supporting equality and open dialogue.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) studies how individuals adjust their communication behaviors to align with or diverge from their conversation partners, influenced by factors such as social status. Convergence, wherein individuals adapt their speech to resemble their interlocutors, often aims to build rapport and gain approval, particularly when interacting with those of higher status. Divergence, wherein individuals emphasize differences, can assert identity and group affiliation.

In "The Farewell", an American comedy-drama directed by Lulu Wang, verbal markers of social status are manifest in the use of kinship terms, formal and informal address, and the balance between directness and indirectness. The film draws attention to the contrast between high-context and low-context communication styles, with the Chinese family's indirect handling of the grandmother's illness exemplifying high-context norms, and the granddaughter's direct confrontation illustrating low-context communication.

The linguistic relevance of this study is demonstrated through the examination of how specific linguistic features serve as indicators of social status within cross-cultural contexts. For instance, the use of kinship terms, rhetorical questions and exclamatory sentences not only conveys respect and hierarchy but also aligns with sociolinguistic theories that link language use to social order. As well as using passive voice or imperative sentences (For example, "Stop it! Everything's already booked...") to issue commands are prominent features of identifying superior social position. The analysis suggests a correlation between social status and the use of positive politeness strategies. In the film, grandmother (higher status) uses them frequently, while granddaughter (lower status) does not have the opportunity to do so.

Moreover, the application of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) highlights the dynamic nature of language in social interactions. Through CAT, we observe how individuals consciously adjust their speech and communicative behaviors to either converge with or diverge from their interlocutors, which can reinforce social alignment or mark social differentiation.

In conclusion, the paper highlights the importance of social status in cross-cultural communication, showing its close connection with linguistic choices and behaviors. Cultural norms and individual identities interact to shape how people communicate their social status, affecting interactions and power dynamics. Understanding these subtleties is essential for effective cross-cultural communication, promoting mutual respect and global cooperation. This study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between language, culture, and social status through a detailed analysis of theoretical frameworks and cinematic discourse.

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List of illustrative materials

1. *The Farewell*. Directed by Lulu Wang, A24, 2019.

SUMMARY

Бакалаврська робота досліджує вплив соціального статусу на сучасну міжкультурну комунікацію з особливим фокусом на лінгвістичні маркери. Використовуючи дискурс-аналіз і теорію комунікативної адаптації (CAT), в роботі досліджується, як соціальний статус впливає на міжкультурний діалог через лінгвістичний вибір і комунікативні стратегії, з метою виявити, як соціальна ієрархія впливає на міжособистісну взаємодію в різних культурних контекстах.

Основна мета цієї дипломної роботи - розглянути, як соціальний статус формує міжкультурний діалог і як він впливає на комунікативну поведінку в різних культурних середовищах. Інтегруючи лінгвістичний аналіз з використанням методу CAT, дослідження визначає ключові лінгвістичні особливості та стратегії, які відображають і враховують соціальний статус у міжкультурній взаємодії. Досліджуючи теоретичні засади та застосовуючи їх до практичних прикладів, важливо враховувати соціальний статус у міжкультурному діалозі різних поколінь та виховання.

Розділ 1 містить огляд лінгвістичних публікацій, присвячених соціальному статусу, особливостям вибору мовної поведінки в різних культурах, ввічливості та дистанції влади. Він включає теоретичні висновки таких авторитетних науковців, як Вільям Лабов, Герт Гофстеде та Едвард Т. Холл. Розділ поділяється на чотири основні частини. Спершу опрацьовується аналіз лінгвістичних підходів до соціального статусу, з акцентом на дослідженнях Лабова, які виявляють взаємозв'язок між мовними змінами та соціальною ієрархією. По-друге, обговорюються культурно-специфічні особливостей мовного вибору, з використанням теорії культурних вимірів Гофстеде для аналізу впливу культурних відмінностей на мовні стратегії. По-третє, досліджуються стратегії ввічливості за Брауном і Левінсоном, які вважаються ключовими для

забезпечення соціальної гармонії і управління міжособистісними стосунками через концепцію "обличчя". Насамкінець, розглядається застосування теорії комунікативної адаптації для аналізу того, як співрозмовники адаптують свою мовну поведінку в залежності від соціального статусу, з метою або конвергенції або дивергенції в комунікаційних стилях.

Розділ 2 присвячений вербальним маркерам соціального статусу в сучасній міжкультурній комунікації на прикладі фільму «Прощання» 2019 року. Цей аналіз висвітлює контрасти між східним і західним стилями спілкування, зображеними у фільмі, і досліджує, як різні культури керують соціальною ієрархією та міжособистісними стосунками за допомогою стратегій ввічливості та стратегій прямої і непрямой комунікації.

У розділі обговорюється, як терміни спорідненості, рівень прямолінійності чи непрямолінійності у спілкуванні та використання стратегій ввічливості розрізняють відповідно висококонтекстний та низькоконтекстний стилі спілкування, що переважають у східній та західній культурах. Це дослідження показує, як культурні особливості суттєво впливають на вербальні та невербальні комунікативні практики, з особливим акцентом на тому, як ці практики відображають базові соціальні структури та динаміку влади.

Наприклад, використання у фільмі родинних звернень у східному контексті означає повагу та встановлює ієрархічні стосунки, що є характерною рисою культур високого контексту, які цінують непрямую комунікацію та повагу до авторитетів.

Робота завершується загальним висновком, який синтезує результати кожного розділу, пропонуючи розуміння взаємозв'язку між соціальним статусом, культурними нормами та комунікаційними

практиками. Він підтверджує важливість врахування соціального та культурного контекстів для розуміння та покращення комунікації через різні культурні кордони.

Ця дипломна робота робить внесок в академічний дискурс, пов'язуючи соціолінгвістичні теорії з практичними прикладами із сучасних медіа, забезпечуючи детальне розуміння того, як соціальний статус впливає на комунікацію. Отримані результати можуть допомогти фахівцям у сфері міжнародного бізнесу, дипломатії та глобального маркетингу розробити комунікаційні стратегії, які враховують культурні та соціальні нюанси, тим самим покращуючи міжкультурну взаємодію та переговори.

Дослідження пропонує напрямки для подальших досліджень, включаючи глибший аналіз невербальних елементів комунікації та їхнього зв'язку із соціальним статусом, а також вплив цифрових комунікаційних платформ на традиційні стилі спілкування в різних культурах.