

CROSS-CULTURAL NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS: DECODING THE SUBTLE LANGUAGE OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the intricate interplay between cultural variations in nonverbal communication and the portrayal of cross-cultural interactions in three seminal works of fiction: "Interpreter of Maladies" (1999) by Jhumpa Lahiri; "The Joy Luck Club" (1989) by Amy Tan; and "Purple Hibiscus" (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Through the lens of the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) proposed by Howard Giles, this research delves into how characters within these novels negotiate their cultural identities and interpersonal relationships through the subtle nuances of nonverbal communication. Drawing from CAT's principles of convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation, the analysis unveils the characters' dynamic strategies for adapting their nonverbal behaviour in response to diverse cultural contexts. By employing CAT, this study illuminates the complex dance of accommodation and negotiation within nonverbal communication, offering fresh insights into the subtleties of cultural interaction as depicted in these literary works. It invites further exploration of the intersection between fiction, cultural studies, and communication theory.

Keywords: Cultural variations; Nonverbal communication; Cross-cultural interactions; Communication Accommodation Theory; Literary works.

INTRODUCTION

Professionals and organisations must be able to handle the complicated terrain of cultural variations in the interconnected world of global business. Although the focus is frequently on linguistic difficulties, effective collaboration relies heavily on nonverbal communication. Accurately recognising and interpreting nonverbal signs can help your organisation succeed by reducing miscommunications and building stronger relationships. Numerous actions, such as posture, eye contact, facial emotions, gestures, and personal appearance, are all included in nonverbal communication. These indicators can reveal a great deal about a person's intentions, attitudes, and

sentiments and frequently have greater weight than spoken words. Effective communication requires an understanding of cultural settings because nonverbal communication is vague and differs throughout cultures. Effective communication is essential for maintaining relationships and having successful social interactions (Matsumoto, 2006). People are more likely to interact with people from diverse cultures as a result of globalisation. The majority of research on cross-cultural communication has been on spoken language, with little attention paid to nonverbal cues. Effective cross-cultural communication requires the ability to decipher nonverbal cues (Dohen et al., 2010). To

avoid criticism or disapproval and preserve social harmony, people frequently employ indirect communication in social settings, when the intended meaning differs from the surface meaning (e.g., "I don't believe everyone shares the same sense of humour"; Clark, 1996). Understanding cultural differences in nonverbal behaviours is essential for indirect communication since misreading nonverbal clues can result in animosity and misunderstanding. The responsibility of providing responses derived from the theoretical background of CAT, to the questions of determining the most communicative when considering nonverbal in the novels, "Interpreter of Maladies" (1999) by Jhumpa Lahiri; "The Joy Luck Club" (1989) by Amy Tan; and "Purple Hibiscus" (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The impact of culture and society on the interpretation of nonverbal expression and the reality of communicating via nonverbal means across various cultural settings are charged in subsequent parts of this paper. Effective communication is unquestionably dependent on comprehending the role of nonverbal behaviour as one dimension of communication competence, as nonverbal behaviour is currently a major area of research in the communications field with a consistent scope on the interpretation of the meaning of nonverbal messages depending on their context. If one considers its potential applications, it offers several intrinsic benefits. Because it supports verbal communication and provides a comprehensive understanding of the negotiation, it is thought to be essential to understanding and effective communication during a negotiation process. Additionally, a good interpretation of nonverbal cues aids in gaining valuable information from other parties involved in the negotiation. Remarkably, being aware of nonverbal communication also protects one's negotiating position from being harmed by unidentified nonverbal cues that reveal private information (Jain & Choudary, 2011; Buck & VanLear, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to examine how characters in selected literary works: "Interpreter of Maladies" by Jhumpa Lahiri, "The Joy Luck Club" by Amy

Tan, and "Purple Hibiscus" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie use nonverbal communication to navigate and adapt to varying cultural contexts. Each of these novels explores characters in cross-cultural settings where subtle nonverbal cues play crucial roles in expressing emotions, negotiating power dynamics, and bridging or reinforcing cultural divides. By focusing on cultural adaptation through nonverbal signals, this study seeks to reveal how characters' interactions reflect deeper cultural negotiations, emphasizing the role that body language, facial expressions, and other nonverbal behaviours play in shaping relationships and identity in multicultural contexts.

Research Framework

This study employs Howard Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as the research framework to dissect and interpret the nonverbal communication strategies of characters. CAT is particularly relevant because it highlights how individuals adjust their communication behaviours—through convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation—based on their social and cultural surroundings. Within the fictional narratives, CAT will guide the analysis of how characters either attempt to bridge or accentuate cultural differences through nonverbal means. Applying CAT to literary analysis offers unique insights into the characters' internal conflicts and interpersonal relationships, as they either adapt or resist nonverbal norms that reflect their evolving identities and affiliations.

Significance

Analyzing fiction through the lens of CAT and nonverbal communication dynamics provides a powerful way to understand cultural communication. Fictional narratives allow for an in-depth portrayal of the nuanced and often unspoken aspects of intercultural interactions that are difficult to capture in real-life studies. These literary works offer readers a glimpse into diverse cultural worlds and depict how individuals, consciously or subconsciously, adjust their nonverbal behaviours to align with or resist cultural expectations. By studying these fictional portrayals, this research underscores the potential of literature to illustrate the complexities of cultural

identity, adaptation, and communication—offering valuable insights for literary and communication studies. The responsibility of providing responses derived from the theoretical background of CAT, to the questions of determining the most communicative when considering nonverbal in the novels, "Interpreter of Maladies" (1999) by Jhumpa Lahiri; "The Joy Luck Club" (1989) by Amy Tan; and "Purple Hibiscus" (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The impact of culture and society on the interpretation of nonverbal expression and the reality of communicating via nonverbal means across various cultural settings are charged in subsequent parts of this paper.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

A broad theoretical framework for intergroup and interpersonal communication is the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). It aims to explain and forecast why, when, and how people modify their communication style during social interactions, as well as the societal repercussions of those modifications. This page begins by introducing some of the fundamental ideas of CAT and giving a brief historical review of its evolution. Second, objective and subjective measures of accommodation are distinguished, and the many adjustment mechanisms that speakers may employ are described. Third, the reasons behind communicative adjustment are explored, along with how the sociohistorical setting in which an interaction takes place can influence them. Lastly, the social ramifications of communicative adjustment are examined, along with a few of the numerous variables that influence and moderate how people see the actions of others. To better understand, "the behavioural changes that people make to attune their communication with their partner, (Bates & Talor, 2016); and the extent to which people perceive their partner as appropriately attuning to them," Howard Giles created the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Crystal, 2011). Later, this idea was used in the study of sociolinguistics, where linguistic accommodation—or simply accommodation—is the process by which people

modify their speech patterns to more closely resemble those of their conversation partners.

3. Literature Review

According to Allen (1999), communication is the creation of meaning through spoken words or nonverbal cues. As a result, nonverbal communication conveys meaning through nonverbal cues such as body language, eye contact, and the use of space and time (Knapp and Hall 2002). Nonverbal communication is used to regularise meaning, highlight, and reinforce information in addition to playing a vital complimentary role to verbal communication. However, scientists have determined that nonverbal communication accounts for 65% of all communication (Burgoon, Buller, and Woodall 1989). These all support the well-known adage that "actions speak louder than voice." Since voice is a component of verbal communication and action is a component of nonverbal communication, nonverbal communication conveys meaning more effectively than verbal communication. For example, people cannot be tricked by body language, posture, facial expressions, or other body language, unlike they can by words. The meaning of "go" in Europe is, to a certain extent, the same in America and other places without different interpretations, demonstrating that verbal word meanings do not change across cultural boundaries. Scholars have, however, argued that individuals who live in societies with homogeneous cultural and societal norms generally and specifically understand the meaning of their gestures, gesticulations, and symbolic interactions, while other subsets of the pluralistic society are drawn to different meanings and interpretations. Numerous studies have shown how important nonverbal clues are to indirect communication. According to Kelly (2001), for instance, when a mother uses nonverbal cues, like pointing to a raincoat, in addition to vocal cues, such as "Don't forget it's raining outside," children are more able to understand the indirect request. Similarly, Kirk et al. (2011) discovered that when nonverbal behaviours were used in conjunction with verbal scenarios, children who struggled with pragmatic understanding were more likely to correctly understand concealed meanings. This

research, however, has only looked at how hand gestures affect how kids understand indirect information.

A recent set of experiments by Chu et al. (2022) investigated the function of both verbal and nonverbal actions in learning and interpreting indirect responses. Experiments 2a and 2b, in which participants saw silent video clips of people answering either neutral questions (containing a similar circumstance without any terrible news) or substantially face-threatening (including breaking negative news), are especially pertinent to the current study. Participants were asked to use only nonverbal clues to determine whether a response was direct, indirect, lie, or neutral. The findings indicated that the duration of the response and four nonverbal behaviours that indicate uncertainty—palm-revealing movements, head tilt, facial shrug, and gaze aversion—were significant predictors of indirect categorisation as well as the length of the response, were important indicators of indirect classification.

In other words, if a response was lengthier or had those four nonverbal clues, people were more likely to classify it as indirect. While Chu et al. (2022) illustrated the significance the study only looked at Western participants' use of nonverbal clues to identify indirect replies, and it's still unclear how people from Eastern cultures interpret indirect replies from nonverbal indicators.

Unplanned physical reactions are represented by involuntary nonverbal communication, which means that they are typically more honest and revealing than verbal or even conscious nonverbal communication, according to Krauss et al. (1996). According to Jain and Choudary (2011), a knowing individual may also influence nonverbal communication. As a result, he may be able to outsmart the sender by understanding the characteristics of the message and interpreting the posture to determine the sender's correct state of mind and action. One example of this is when someone aware that people who tell lies frequently blink their eyes outsmarts the proper posture by being extra careful not to blink, even when lying. Another example is when someone who understands that a hug symbolises friendship will purposefully hug his or her worst enemy as a ruse

to catch them off guard or as part of an attempt to strengthen their bond.

- **Cross-Cultural Communication in Literature:**

Culture has a strong influence on communication, and people differ in how much they rely on nonverbal clues to express themselves (van de Vijver, 2017). For instance, personal autonomy and self-expression are valued more in individualistic cultures. People from these cultures may therefore express their feelings and ideas through a variety of nonverbal behaviours. Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, place a greater emphasis on social harmony, group cohesion, and conflict avoidance. Consequently, nonverbal cues are frequently avoided since they may highlight a particular person and disturb the peace in the group (Matsumoto, 2006). Matsumoto et al. (2008) investigated how individualistic and collectivist cultures in over 30 countries differed in how they expressed their emotions nonverbally. Their findings demonstrated that, in comparison to individualistic societies, collectivist societies typically display lower levels of overall emotional expressiveness. Americans are more likely than Chinese to utilise hand gestures in face-to-face communication, according to a different study by So (2010).

People from diverse cultural backgrounds may interpret nonverbal cues differently (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2016). For instance, eye contact is frequently used in Western cultures to convey attention, liking, politeness, honesty, and self-confidence (Vargas-Urpi, 2013). Eastern cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese, on the other hand, typically attempt to avoid making direct eye contact as a display of deference, civility, and compliance (Akechi et al., 2013). Similar to this, pointing with the index finger at someone is typically accepted in Western societies and is frequently used to highlight or specifically refer to someone. Nonetheless, pointing with the index finger at someone is frequently viewed as confrontational, unfriendly, and impolite in Chinese culture. Rather, the Chinese refer to people with an open hand (Kita, 2009). Raised eyebrows offer yet another illustration of obvious cultural distinctions. A raised eyebrow is frequently used in

Western culture to express astonishment, curiosity, attention, or scepticism (Rozin & Cohen, 2003). However, a raised eyebrow can also signify pride, delight, and excitement in Chinese culture (Yu, 2002).

People may be more adept at identifying and deciphering nonverbal clues from members of their cultural group than from those from other groups, given these cross-cultural variations in the production and perception of nonverbal behaviours. This is because, compared to people from other cultures, they are more accustomed to and exposed to nonverbal behaviours inside their society. Cross-cultural studies on how emotions are expressed on the face provide the majority of the supporting data. For instance, in a meta-analysis of 97 research involving 22,148 participants from 42 different countries, 23 different ethnic groups, and a wide range of cultural backgrounds, Elfenbein and Ambady (2002) examined the universality and cultural specificity of emotion detection.

Although emotions were generally recognised at greater chance levels, the results showed that within the same cultural group, emotion recognition accuracy was much higher, indicating the existence of an in-group advantage. It's important to remember that majority groups frequently had a worse understanding of minority groups' feelings than the opposite and that the in-group advantage tended to wane as cultural groups interacted more. Nonverbal actions in encoding and decoding emotions have been the main focus of cross-cultural studies on nonverbal communication up to this point. However, it is still unclear if this kind of in-group advantage extends to recognising indirect responses from nonverbal clues.

4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to explore the intricate dynamics of cross-cultural nonverbal communication as depicted in literature. Qualitative content analysis is a method well-suited to analyzing text, particularly in identifying patterns, themes, and underlying meanings within narrative contexts. Through this approach, the research examines how

characters' nonverbal behaviours in selected novels reflect cultural accommodation, using Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as an analytical lens. The focus is on understanding both the explicit and implicit forms of nonverbal communication, such as gestures, proxemics, and facial expressions, and their influence on cross-cultural interactions. This method allows for a detailed examination of the cultural and communicative strategies within the novels, aligning each finding with the theoretical principles of convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation from CAT.

The textual analysis framework involves systematically identifying instances where CAT principles manifest in the characters' nonverbal cues. By applying CAT's concepts, the analysis delves into how characters in “Interpreter of Maladies”, “The Joy Luck Club”, and “Purple Hibiscus” respond to cultural differences through subtle adaptations or resistances in their body language, expressions, and spatial behaviours. The selected texts are particularly fitting for this analysis, as each explores complex cultural identities and interpersonal relationships shaped by nonverbal interactions. “Interpreter of Maladies” captures the cultural distances between Indian and American identities; “The Joy Luck Club” addresses generational and cultural divides within Chinese-American families, and “Purple Hibiscus” portrays the nuances of Nigerian and Western influences on family dynamics. These works provide rich, varied settings for studying nonverbal accommodation and resistance, making them ideal for analyzing cross-cultural nonverbal communication through CAT.

5. Analysis

It has long been understood that nonverbal cues including head movements, hand gestures, facial emotions, and eye contact are essential components of communication. For instance, studies have demonstrated that eye contact conveys social closeness between participants in a conversation (Breil & Böckler, 2021; Willis et al., 2011), facial expressions and head movements improve the perception of the emotional status of the expressers (Krumhuber et al., 2013; Livingstone & Palmer, 2016), and hand gestures

aid listeners in understanding the context of a conversation (Hostetter, 2011). Nonverbal clues can be especially significant in indirect communication (Dohen et al., 2010). According to Troppa (2009), nonverbal communication influences how people relate to and engage with one another in addition to the traditional sending and receiving of messages for the express goal of conversing. It is a means of expressing resemblance and animosity, deference or impoliteness, acceptance or rejection. Since nonverbal cues are sufficient to establish boundaries in a relationship, they must be appropriately and meaningfully perceived. In one of the social psychology studies of nonverbal behaviour, Krauss et al. (1996) proposed it as a type of nonverbal communication with supporting facial expressions such as toothbaring, eye narrowing, and wide-eyed staring gestures when the communicator is in fear, and nose wrinkles when the communicator is in disgust.

As an example of nonverbal behaviour, facial expressions are said to have the potential to serve a variety of purposes, including communicating information about the expressor's emotional state and acting as an affective experience. An exclusive example of all potential interpersonal communication methods that are conducted nonverbally is nonverbal communication, which includes all types of communication that do not include spoken or written languages. As an example of nonverbal behaviour, facial expressions are said to have the capacity to perform a variety of tasks, including acting as an affective experience and communicating information about the expression's emotional state. Any kind of interpersonal communication that does not use spoken or written language is considered nonverbal communication. This is an exclusive example of all conceivable nonverbal communication methods.

According to Verderber et al. (2009), there are three key areas of nonverbal communication: body language, also known as kinesic communication, which is defined by the use of facial expressions, body movement, and postures; physical environment, also known as proxemic communication, which helps with the use of available space, distance, or proximity to other people in the communication scenario; and

personal attributes, also known as artifactual communication, which is a type of nonverbal communication that communicators use to alter appearances. Nonverbal communication includes both conscious and subliminal messages. In conscious nonverbal communication, the sender is aware that the message is conveyed along with its general meaning for the receiver to understand, and they are also aware that the recipient is receiving the message with their knowledge and consent. The recipient of an embrace, which represents friendship, is an illustration of this. Because of the significance of the message, subliminal messages are predicated on a subconscious reading that the recipients are not consciously aware of. Even while subliminal messages don't raise consciousness on a conscious level, the police and military uniforms serve as an example of this since they subtly convey the authority of those wearing them, which is unconsciously absorbed by the recipients and influences them.

However, it is clarified that the majority of nonverbal communications are transmitted unintentionally. It is claimed that both conscious and subliminal information can be transmitted deliberately or involuntarily. It has been shown that many negotiators are unaware that they are using nonverbal communication during speech processes like negotiations. Typical examples that demonstrate the involuntary nature of nonverbal communication are body language and gestures. Daily observations of people who inadvertently communicate nonverbal cues through their body postures, gestures, and facial expressions provide examples that equally clarify the problem. Falsehood tellers typically use numerous eye blinks to provide a clear nonverbal message to listeners, which is an involuntary way of characterising their communication (Gabriel & Raam, 2002; Verderber et al., 2009).

Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies"

Interpreter of Maladies (1999) explores the human and social conditions of Indian migrants, focusing on themes of marital difficulties, miscarriages, and disconnection from their homeland. The analysis highlights Lahiri's contemplative prose, focusing on second-generation diasporic perspectives and confined settings (Koshy, 2011). The story,

spanning five days, explores past doubts and cultural connections between a couple living alone across borders. Lahiri exposes tensions and uncertainties in their family union, highlighting the importance of human connection and identity. The couple's anxiety and instability, influenced by work pressure and insufficient time, lead to misconceptions and hostility. Characters like Shoba develop feelings of mistrust and neglect, highlighting the challenges faced by immigrants in postcolonial worlds.

Given the vast range of plot forms used in the short story genre, several techniques must be used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the connections between various pieces. Even though every one of Lahiri's books has a distinct premise and characters, they are connected in ways that unite the collection as a business. The characters in Lahiri's stories are either Americans of Indian descent, Indians living in India, or Indians living in the US. Furthermore, depending on how the stories relate to Indian culture, they can be divided into several affiliations and groupings. Lahiri has received a great deal of praise for her nine cohesive pieces, in which she depicts folks from all over the globe.

Throughout the book, Lahiri emphasises communication as one of the universal topics. The tales show how important communication is to a relationship's success or failure. While there are times when communication is used well and allows the characters to form close, strong bonds, there are other times when communication is ineffective or shallow, which results in relationships that are unstable and constrained. By letting readers feel the benefits and repercussions that have arisen as a result of the short stories, Lahiri demonstrates the value of communication in interpersonal relationships. We acknowledge the need to connect with our loved ones through the experiences of a few of the characters. Throughout the book, Lahiri emphasises communication as one of the universal topics. The tales show how important communication is to a relationship's success or failure. While there are times when communication is used well and allows the characters to form close, strong bonds, there are other times when communication is ineffective or shallow, which results in relationships that are

unstable and constrained. By letting readers feel the benefits and repercussions that have arisen as a result of the short stories, Lahiri demonstrates the value of communication in interpersonal relationships. We acknowledge the need to connect with our loved ones through the experiences of a few of the characters. By demonstrating that humans require human interaction regardless of their background, Lahiri weaves the yearning to connect and converse with others into her narrative. For humanity to feel, its messages must be communicated completely.

Lahiri has a talent for conveying humanity's shortcomings and triumphs; more precisely, she writes about the everyday, pervasive hardship that characterises human existence. A theme concerning the general difficulties and misunderstandings that people have while attempting to connect is formed by Lahiri's choice of narrative style, her frequent reminders of the similarities among all people, and her nuanced symbolism. "A Temporary Matter" is the first story in *Interpreter of Maladies*, focusing on the complex psychological forces causing Shoba and Shukumar to fall apart as a married couple. Lahiri skilfully portrays the characters' internal struggles and the resulting denouement, highlighting the complexities of conjugal relationships and the climax where Shoba decides to separate from Shukumar.

"When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine" reinforces the idea that "your guest is your God." Despite her youth, Lilia helps her mother serve them meals and her father orders her to take Mr. Pirzada's coat from him each night. All of this encourages Indian customs and values, which means that parents, regardless of where they live, instil in their children the same principles they were raised with. In "Interpreter of Maladies," communication breaks down repeatedly, leading to hurtful consequences. An Indian tourist guide, Mr. Kapasi, loses his ability to communicate with his wife, leading to a loveless marriage. He also struggles with language barriers, with his children not listening to his parents or his concerns about monkeys. The Kapasis and Dases, both Bengali, face similar difficulties in their lives, such as loveless marriages. The characters' cultural

backgrounds differ, but both face similar challenges.

Jhumpa's "Real Durwan" highlights the social malady of selfishness, meanness, and callousness in society. The story follows an old woman, Ma, who is driven out of a flat building due to the residents' demands for a "real durwan." Despite her poverty, the kindness of the residents disappears when their sink is stolen. Jhumpa Lahiri's "Sexy" explores the lives and culture of Bengali immigrants in America, highlighting the disconnection from their Indian roots and the influence of foreign cultures. The story revolves around modern Boston society, where immigrants often feel alienated from their families. The protagonist, Miranda, compares herself to Indians in Boston, highlighting the alienation experienced by grown-up immigrants. The story highlights the importance of love, not just sex, and the importance of being in each other's thoughts.

"Mrs Sen" by Lahiri is a heart-tugging story about an Indian immigrant who works as a babysitter in America. She faces adjustment difficulties and is isolated from her family and friends. Lahiri's story highlights the desolation Indians feel in Boston, missing their homeland and the sense of empathy they experienced in their childhood. Lahiri's short story "This Blessed House" centres on a brief time in the lives of the two characters. Due to their parent's wishes, the pair were brought together after meeting "just four months prior" (142). This is where their narrative begins, as it quickly becomes clear that they are very different from one another: Twinkle is a second-generation American, while Sanjeev is the son of Calcutta-based parents. Their ability to build a good relationship is further hampered by this fundamental cultural gap.

Newlyweds Sanjeev and Tanima, also known as Twinkle, have just been together for four months and are having a hard time adjusting to married life. Lahiri makes many references to the fact that both have radically different personalities throughout the narrative. When Twinkle starts discovering Christian artefacts scattered throughout the property, their argument erupts. Twinkle gathers the relics on the mantle and displays them whenever possible, despite Sanjeev's desire to discard them.

"The Treatment of BibiHaldar" by Lahiri explores the theme of exile and alienation in a native milieu. Set in Calcutta, the story follows BibiHaldar, an orphan with epilepsy, who becomes an immigrant due to her own experiences of alienation and victimization. The story highlights the struggle between simplicity and craftiness, and the disease of loneliness in modern society, in which marriage is often seen as the only cure. The last tale in Lahiri's collection, Interpreter of Maladies, is titled "The Third and Final Continent." Lahiri's "The Third and Final Continent" tells the heartwarming tale of an Indian immigrant who was born in West Bengal, India, moved to London with no money, and eventually found employment in America. This man's unwavering commitment to international travel is the only thing that has brought him this far. Only his perseverance and hard labour brought him to Boston, where he finds a budget hotel and eventually a home occupied by an elderly woman. Both the narrator and the elderly woman, Mrs. Croft, struggle to fit in with contemporary American culture. Although the protagonists in this novel are strangers, they have an unnamed relationship and are all going through the same stage of transitioning from a very different previous existence to a new, challenging one.

Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club"

The story of four Chinese immigrant ladies fleeing their history and their American-grown daughters is told in this twentieth-century novel. In addition to the daughters' internal tensions and struggles, the narrative shows the moms' reasons and difficult backgrounds. The moms and daughters deal with internal conflicts, familial strife, and social collisions throughout the entire book. Cultural differences lead to conflict and misunderstandings, which ultimately result in the clash of Chinese and American values, values, and priorities. Language barriers cause misunderstandings, but the primary effect is a lack of mutual empathy and understanding, which breeds conflict. "In Tan's depiction of the distance between the mothers and daughters in The Joy Luck Club, language assumes a metonymic relation to culture." Hamilton. Cultural barriers are created by the mothers' and daughters' language hurdles. Cultural boundaries

are emphasised and directly impacted by language problems. Communication between people from other countries is hindered by cultural boundaries, particularly between mothers and daughters, and not just in a literal sense. The mothers' and daughters' language divide may be symbolic.

There is a language barrier between the mothers and the daughters as a result of their inability to understand and comprehend one another. "These explanations gave me the impression that my mother and I were speaking two separate languages, which is exactly what we did. She responded in Chinese when I spoke to her in English" (Tan 84). Communication between people causes various ideas to proliferate. Both literally and figuratively, language binds communities together. People are greatly influenced by language and culture, which makes them vulnerable to misunderstandings when there is an excessively large barrier. Language limitations cause disruptions in familial interactions. "They are unable to understand each other's emotions, preferences, and dislikes due to differing viewpoints and a lack of a common language of communication" (Priya). People who miscommunicate with one another cause rifts and set the stage for conflict and indifference. People grow impatient and disengaged when there is no communication. "They observe daughters who become irritated when their mothers speak in Chinese and who believe their explanations in broken English are foolish" (Tan 31). "My mother and I spoke two different languages, which we did not (Tan 12)

In this story, "Rules of the Game", nonverbal communication is essential in depicting the relationship between Waverly and her mother, Lindo Jong. Lindo's expressions and subtle gestures reveal her pride and expectations for Waverly's success in chess, even though she rarely vocalizes them. Her proud, observant gaze as Waverly practices chess embodies a silent pressure. The famous scene where Lindo silently walks away when Waverly tries to assert her independence speaks volumes; this act conveys Lindo's disappointment and reinforces the unspoken expectations rooted in their cultural background.

In the second story "Two Kinds," the generational conflict between Jing-Mei and her mother, Suyuan, is conveyed through nonverbal cues during piano practice sessions. Jing-Mei's resistance is evident through her body language—slumped posture, a lack of enthusiasm, and deliberate mistakes. Her mother's facial expressions and gestures reveal her growing frustration and determination. During their climactic argument, Jing-Mei's refusal to meet her mother's gaze, combined with Suyuan's tightened stance, communicates the pain and misunderstandings that words fail to express, underscoring their cultural and personal divide.

This "The Red Candle" focuses on Lindo Jong's early experiences in an arranged marriage and her eventual defiance. Nonverbal communication is used to express her inner strength and quiet resistance. For instance, Lindo's body language—her calm demeanour and subtle defiance in gestures—illustrates her unwillingness to fully submit to her husband's family. She carefully masks her emotions, using her posture and expressions to signal resilience while outwardly performing her duties. Lindo's final act of nonverbal defiance, manipulating the candle ceremony to dissolve her marriage, conveys her resourcefulness and courage without a word.

In "Half and Half," Rose Hsu Jordan reflects on her mother An-Mei's nonverbal responses to grief and belief. When Rose's younger brother drowns, An-Mei's silent vigil at the beach and her refusal to leave convey her hope and despair. This stoic, nonverbal expression of grief illustrates the depth of her pain, as she clutches her Bible and refuses to speak, embodying her spiritual struggle and cultural values. Rose later recalls her mother's silent strength as she faces her marital challenges, mirroring An-Mei's resilience through her subdued body language.

In the story "Scar", An-Mei Hsu's childhood experiences with her estranged mother use nonverbal communication to convey familial bonds and cultural expectations. An-Mei's observation of her mother's gestures, such as her delicate handling of objects and her silent, sorrowful expressions, reveal the pain of familial separation and societal judgment. An-Mei's scar, symbolizing the trauma and unspoken connection to her mother, serves as a nonverbal reminder of

their bond, one that transcends words. The mother's tender, yet pained touch as she cares for An-Mei after an injury, reflects a complex love that is rarely verbalized in their culture.

The last story "Waiting Between the Trees" follows Ying-Ying St. Clair as she reflects on her life choices and the quiet submission in her early marriage. Ying-Ying's nonverbal cues—her silent acceptance and distant gaze—convey her resignation and internalized repression. Her passive body language and the absence of overt resistance illustrate how deeply cultural expectations have shaped her. Later in life, Ying-Ying's quiet presence and observing gaze as she watches her daughter Lena struggle with marriage challenges are nonverbal ways she tries to impart wisdom, revealing her hope that Lena will break free from the same patterns of silence and submission.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Purple Hibiscus"

Speech and silence are significant themes in the book, to the extent that the contrast between them appears frequently in both personal and political contexts. This concept is also addressed in the titles of two of the book's sections: "A Different Silence" and "Speaking with our Spirits." The constant fear of Papa that Mama, Kambili, and Jaja feel is linked to silence. Because she doesn't want to upset her father and is scared of stuttering, Kambili in particular rarely talks. Since they are rarely left alone together and never allowed to discuss Papa's violence, she and Jaja develop a "language of the eyes," communicating only via glances. In the presence of Auntie Ifeoma's family, who are constantly singing, joking, and expressing their opinions, as well as Father Amadi, who occasionally breaks into song while praying, Kambili's quiet then becomes even more noticeable. Gudu morni. Did the people of your house rise well, oh? (Adichie 66) — 'Oh?' (Breathing Control) signifies an ingressive exclamation, showing emotional questioning.

However, Kamili begins to talk more and even sing with the support of Ifeoma and Father Amadi. Additionally, Jaja becomes more at ease speaking, and he uses his silence—which is no longer one of fear—as a weapon against Papa by refusing to

communicate with him at the political level. Given that their newspaper is the only one to criticise the dishonest administration, Papa and Ade Coker are the best examples of the power of free speech. Unlike the majority of the other lecturers, Auntie Ifeoma also criticises the corruption she observes. Both Auntie Ifeoma's loss of employment and Ade Coker's quiet caused by a package bomb serve as potent reminders of the value of free expression. In the end, Adichie always presents freedom of expression and music as an improvement to restriction and fear-based quiet. 'Eh? You like coming to this bush place?' His eyes widened theatrically. (Adichie 65) — 'Eh?' (Breathing Control) denotes an aggressive cry that demonstrates emotional inquiry.

Language is a fully human and non-instinctive means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and wants through freely created symbols, according to Sapir (1921:8). The words "emotion" and "desire" make it apparent that language may convey a lot of information that none of them can fully capture, and "idea" in particular is essentially ambiguous. However, there are numerous systems of freely created symbols that are only considered language in what we perceive to be a metaphorical or extended sense of the word used in the expression body language, which employs postures, eye contact, gestures, and other behaviours that appear to meet this requirement of Sapir's definition. The mentioned description of the language has instead followed the semiotics theory put forward by linguists like Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure, among others. A prevalent idea that is sometimes referred to as the "science of signs," "of symbolic behaviour," or "of communication systems" is "semiotics," also known as semiology. In the context of communication and society, semiotics studies how "signs" contribute to the creation and reconstruction of "meaning." The broad field of semiotics is primarily concerned with the analysis and interpretation of the sign system. It is a scientific approach to investigating how the signification process functions. It examines signs, symbols, and meaning, particularly as components of language. Semiotics is the study of anything that represents anything else in addition to what are commonly referred to

as signs in speech. Signs can be words, sounds, gestures, or things in a semiotic sense.

"A sign is something that suggests the presence or existence of fact, condition, or quality immediately evident," states Pekerti & Thomas (2003). This "something" could be anything that is employed to give the mind significance. Signification, according to Saussure, is the connection between a sign or system of signs and their referential reality. Every tribe or culture has given signs and symbols meanings or interpretations depending on this. These interpretations or meanings are somewhat unique to specific civilisations or societies. Some (signs) are universal, though. Since the aesthetic worth of literature is mostly dependent on imagery or the metaphorical use of words, they are also quite important. Its foundation is an analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*'s use of signs and meaning. Uncle abuses his wife and kids in a way that calls into doubt filial and divine love, which may be related to sadism masquerading as religious piety. He repeatedly abuses his wife, even when she is pregnant, and his kids. Papa's incredibly aggressive temperament is demonstrated by Mamma's loss of a six-week-old pregnancy as a result of the violence inflicted against her (p. 248). Domestic abuse, of which the husband is fairly generous, can occasionally cause the wife to acquire swollen eyes that are the "black-purple colour of an overripe avocado" (p. 11). The situation is the same with his kids.

In the first story "The Silence in the House" "the Achike family home is defined by silence, reflecting the fear and repression imposed by Eugene, the authoritarian father. Kambili and Jaja's silence—averted gazes, lowered heads, and minimal communication—demonstrate their submission and the lack of freedom within the household. Their mother, Beatrice, also shows nonverbal submission; her bowed head and quiet demeanour reveal her internalized suffering. This silence is a form of nonverbal protest and survival, as speaking out or showing defiance leads to physical punishment. This atmosphere highlights how silence serves as a nonverbal language of repression and control.

In a significant nonverbal act of defiance in "The Breaking of the Figurines", Jaja breaks his father's prized figurines, signalling his growing resistance

to Eugene's authority. This action is wordless but laden with meaning, as it challenges Eugene's oppressive control and the unspoken rules of the household. Kambili watches in shock, understanding the weight of this silent rebellion. The broken figurines become a metaphor for the crumbling control Eugene holds over the family and illustrate how nonverbal acts can express rebellion even in a repressive environment.

Nonverbal communication in the story "Aunt Ifeoma's Home" Aunt Ifeoma's home contrasts starkly with the Achike household, reflecting warmth, freedom, and familial affection. Ifeoma's welcoming gestures, laughter, and open body language create an environment where Kambili and Jaja experience familial warmth for the first time. The siblings' initial stiffness and awkward body language, followed by their gradual relaxation and smiles, show their adjustment to this new environment. Ifeoma's physical affection, like touching Kambili's shoulder or hugging Jaja, provides a stark contrast to the Achike household and illustrates the nurturing, expressive nature of a more open, accepting family.

In the story "The Smile of Father Amadi", father Amadi's nonverbal communication deeply impacts Kambili, who is captivated by his warm smile, gentle eye contact, and the calm assurance in his gestures. His nonverbal cues make her feel safe and valued, emotions she rarely experiences at home. Kambili's shy glances, hesitant smiles, and eventual openness in Father Amadi's presence reveal her yearning for connection and acceptance. Father Amadi's warm, nonverbal cues help Kambili break free from her shell of silence, illustrating how positive nonverbal communication can foster personal growth and healing.

In "The Purple Hibiscus Blooms", the purple hibiscus, grown by Aunt Ifeoma, symbolizes freedom and change, and it becomes a powerful, nonverbal symbol for Kambili and Jaja. When Kambili touches the flowers, her delicate interaction with them represents her emerging courage and hope. The purple hibiscus's vibrant colour and growth in an otherwise restrictive environment serve as a metaphor for resilience and personal transformation. This subtle act of touching and observing the purple hibiscus

signifies Kambili's nonverbal connection to a life of independence and self-expression.

In the last story "The Silent Rebellion"; as in the novel's closing sections, Jaja's silent acceptance of responsibility for his mother's act of poisoning Eugene is a final act of nonverbal communication that conveys loyalty and sacrifice. Jaja's stoic expression and resigned posture as he confesses to the authorities encapsulate his protective love for his mother and sister, as well as his transformation from a repressed child to a figure of strength. His nonverbal acceptance, while unspoken, is a powerful act that underscores his maturity and dedication to his family's well-being.

These instances illustrate how *Purple Hibiscus* uses nonverbal communication to deepen the emotional impact of the narrative, capturing themes of repression, defiance, love, and liberation. Through body language, silence, and symbolic gestures, Adichie portrays the complexities of each character's internal struggle and growth.

6. Discussion

In discussing the insights from your study on "Interpreter of Maladies", "The Joy Luck Club", and "Purple Hibiscus", several notable findings related to nonverbal accommodation emerge, particularly through the lens of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). This theory focuses on how individuals adapt their communication—often through convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation strategies—in response to perceived cultural or social differences.

1. The selected characters in these novels exhibit convergence (mirroring gestures or body language to foster closeness), divergence (emphasizing differences to maintain cultural identity), and at times over-accommodation (excessive efforts to bridge cultural gaps, which may come across as insincere or exaggerated). For example, in "Interpreter of Maladies", characters like Mrs Das use body language that contrasts with traditional expectations, highlighting how nonverbal cues communicate complex emotional states and social boundaries. Similarly, "The Joy Luck Club" illustrates generational conflicts in Chinese-American families where nonverbal communication becomes a tool for bridging, or at

times, deepening generational divides. Such accommodations reveal how nonverbal expressions are essential for managing relationships in multicultural settings

2. The nonverbal choices made by these characters reveal significant insights into their cultural identity negotiations. In "Purple Hibiscus", for instance, Kambili's body language subtly reflects her internal struggle between traditional Nigerian values and Western influences, which often diverges from her father's rigid expectations. This divergence of nonverbal communication serves as a quiet form of resistance and self-assertion, allowing her to explore personal identity amid strict cultural expectations. Such portrayals illustrate how, beyond words, gestures, silence, and proxemics reveal layers of cultural and identity-related conflict, especially within multicultural or multi-generational families.

3. These literary depictions provide valuable lessons for real-world cross-cultural interactions, suggesting that nonverbal accommodations can help individuals bridge cultural divides. Characters' successes and failures in these novels underscore the importance of sensitivity to nonverbal cues, suggesting that real-world intercultural communication might benefit from an awareness of nonverbal convergence or divergence strategies. Such insights contribute to a growing body of research emphasizing nonverbal cues' importance in maintaining social harmony and facilitating smoother intercultural interactions. These findings highlight how fiction serves as a powerful medium for studying cultural communication dynamics, adding depth to both theoretical understanding and practical approaches to cross-cultural interactions. For further reading, you may refer to comprehensive sources like the Oxford Research Encyclopedia on CAT or recent studies on family communication accommodation in cross-cultural settings.

7. Conclusion

The study on cross-cultural nonverbal communication dynamics in "Interpreter of Maladies", "The Joy Luck Club", and "Purple Hibiscus", viewed through the framework of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), reveals how characters use nonverbal cues to

navigate cultural identities. Key findings highlight that convergence, divergence, and over-accommodation play critical roles in conveying affiliation, boundaries, and tensions. Nonverbal behaviours—such as silence, body language, and symbolic actions—are shown to be powerful indicators of underlying cultural dynamics and identity negotiations, providing insights into the subtle yet impactful role of nonverbal communication in cross-cultural settings

This research makes interdisciplinary contributions by bridging communication theory with literary analysis, enhancing understanding of how fictional narratives illustrate communication theories like CAT in nuanced, culturally rich scenarios. By examining nonverbal accommodations in literature, the study deepens our appreciation of how fictional works reflect and inform real-world communication dynamics across cultures, adding depth to both literary and communication fields. Such interdisciplinary work illustrates how literature serves as a lens for exploring complex interpersonal and cultural themes, enriching both fields through a shared focus on human interaction and identity.

Future studies could extend this analysis to other literary works that explore cross-cultural interactions or even to autobiographies and memoirs that offer real-life perspectives on cultural accommodation. Additionally, exploring CAT and nonverbal dynamics within non-Western or indigenous literature could further expand understanding of nonverbal accommodation across diverse cultural contexts. Investigating nonverbal cues in various genres, such as speculative fiction or historical novels, could reveal new insights into cultural adaptation and accommodation, offering an even broader scope for understanding cross-cultural communication.

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