

An Analysis of Interpersonal Communication for the Film *Pride and Prejudice*

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates interpersonal communication in the 2005 film *Pride and Prejudice* from a sociolinguistic perspective. It focuses on communication issues arising from inadequate interpersonal interactions particularly in relation to gender and socioeconomic class, while examining how these factors, along with speakers' message expression, influence communication and contribute to misunderstanding between characters. Guided by Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), the study explores uncertainty management and self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships. While previous research has mainly examined non-verbal communication in the film, limited attention has been given to verbal interaction and interpersonal communication behaviours such as self-disclosure. A qualitative approach was employed using purposive sampling, and the sample dialogues were transcribed and analysed. Findings reveal that differences in gender and socioeconomic class, together with varying levels of self-disclosure, shape interpersonal interactions and often lead to miscommunication and conflict. This study highlights the importance of sociolinguistic factors in understanding interpersonal communication in film discourse.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Sociolinguistic, Gender, Socioeconomic, Self-Disclosure

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication explores the way people share messages with each other in personal and social settings. It emphasizes both spoken words and non-verbal communication components such as facial expressions and gestures which assist in shaping relationships, identity and social order. Recent past studies establish that interpersonal communication plays a major role in education, workplaces as well as everyday life, indicating that human connections are based on good interpersonal skills (Beenen et al., 2023). Besides that, it offers the tools and frameworks to recognise how communication patterns affect trust, intimacy and conflict, resulting in it being useful and significant for analysing cultural texts.

Sociolinguistics focuses on how language links with society and reflects social structures, identities and cultural norms. In literature, this approach investigates how conversations and interactions can expose power, gender roles and social class. Researches establish that sociolinguistics assists to identify implicit meanings in texts and performances, notably when language interrelates with social hierarchies (Akhmadieva et al., 2026). By assessing speech acts, tone and communication style, sociolinguistics sheds light on how characters shape relationships and how audiences analyse these interactions in broader culture contexts.

Incorporating both interpersonal communication and sociolinguistics produces a well-rounded and balanced framework in analysing films such as *Pride and Prejudice*. Interpersonal communication theories facilitate to elucidate the immediate feelings and friction between characters, whereas sociolinguistics situates these exchanges within social and cultural hierarchies. Collectively, these two approaches strengthen understanding or how dialogue and behaviour develop meaning across gender and social class.

Problem Statement

Existing research often treats interpersonal communication and sociolinguistics as distinct fields failing to adequately examine how face-to-face dialogue and classic literature adaptations reflect social hierarchy and gender systems. Consequently, there is a lack of a systematic framework for analysing conversational patterns in media like *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) which heavily rely on non-verbal cues and dialogue to drive relational conflicts. This disregard might stem from emotional deficiencies and unclear expression by the message sender. A study by Nasution and Alfikri (2022) found that in Indonesia, some family relationships failed as a result of problems with communication, egotism, discontentment, economic factors, time restraints, a lack of education, outside interferences, and disturbances. This emphasises how important social intelligence and excellent interpersonal communication are to overcoming obstacles and guaranteeing the delivery of a message to the intended audience.

A study by Zhan (2012) discusses the non-verbal communication used in the *Pride and Prejudice* film and how the cues determine the characters' social status and shape the characters' thoughts and actions that will soon contribute to the theme and plot of the storyline. One example taken from the film was the first meetup between Elizabeth and Darcy. While attributing Darcy's socially unacceptable behaviour during the meetup due to his arrogance and cold demeanour towards Elizabeth, the author describes how Darcy keeps staring at Elizabeth which could be resulted in a difference of gender or social class. This behaviour aligns with the psychological framework where men use eye contact to signal status and dominance (Nelson, 2010). Thus, the reason why men stare more than women and how Darcy easily did the same to Elizabeth during their first interaction. The study is mainly focusing on non-verbal expressions, hence, the lack in providing the root cause of why certain actions were made by the characters through verbal expressions.

This study assesses the utilization of interpersonal communication in the film *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), by identifying how gender and social class influence communication exchange. Both verbal and non-verbal interactions were thoroughly reviewed in order to reveal how these communication patterns shape relationships and determine deeper social dynamics.

Research questions:

1. What are the verbal and non-verbal interpersonal communication attributes used in the film *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) based on gender and social class?
2. How do the interpersonal communication attributes in the film *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) affect the characters' relationship?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal communication theories serve as the core foundation for relationship development and interaction. DeVito (2015) views interaction as a dynamic exchange rather than a linear message transfer. Attraction Theory, Relationship Rules Theory, Relational Dialectics, Social Penetration Theory, Politeness Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Symbolic Interactionism and Attribution Theory contribute a deeper understanding for this study which highlights distinct aspects of interaction (DeVito, 2019). To illustrate, Attraction Theory emphasizes people's level of attractiveness as factors forming communication, while Relationship rules Theory suggests that interpersonal interactions are maintained by adhering to specific behaviour. Social Penetration theory investigates how relationships develop over time, progressive from simple to advanced intimate connections (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Understanding these theories and their development shows that not only do they contain similar constructs, or the same constructs but with slightly different names, language can vary across and within discipline (Davis et. al., 2015).

Sociolinguistics support this discussion by examining how language use reflects social structures and identities. Two major approaches; interactional sociolinguistics and variationist sociolinguistics, illustrate the interplay between language and society. Interactional sociolinguistics focuses on face-to-face exchanges and cultural

expectations. Sociolinguistics also investigates how class, gender and region influence dialectal differences. Labov's work demonstrates that socioeconomic status correlates with linguistic variation, with higher classes favouring standardized forms. Principles of gender stratification in sociolinguistics depict that women commonly adopt prestige variants and act as innovators in language change. These insights highlight that communication patterns are formed not only by interpersonal dynamics but also by broader cultural and social hierarchies.

Research on *Pride and Prejudice* has consistently emphasized the interplay of gender, class and communication, making the novel and its adaptations a rich site for analysis. Zhan (2012) identified verbal and non-verbal cues in the film that signal social identity, such as Mr. Darcy's use of a curricle to mark his elite status. Cai (2011) examined Elizabeth Bennet's speech patterns, noting her reliance on subjective opinions rather than social standing, which complicated her interactions with Mr. Darcy. Hariyanti (2014) explored class division in the narrative, showing how marriage functioned as a means of social mobility. Besides that, more recent studies have expanded this perspective by highlighting cultural influences on interpersonal communication, noting that family background and social expectations shape dialogue in Austen's work Yimam (2019). Similarly, Mohammed Abdalgane (2021) addressed gendered differences in speech power, observing that women's communication often reflects less overt dominance compared to men. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that Austen's narrative provides a nuanced case study for examining how interpersonal communication is shaped by identity, culture and social hierarchy.

Conclusively, interpersonal communication theories and sociolinguistic views reveal that communication is both a personal strategy and a social act. While theories such as Social Penetration and Politeness explain individual approaches to interaction, sociolinguistics situates these exchanges within structures of class and gender. Previous studies on *Pride and Prejudice* demonstrate how these dynamics unfold in narrative form, showing that communication is deeply tied to identity, power and social mobility. The literature review suggests that analyzing communication requires attention to both micro-level interactions and macro-level social forces, which together shape how individuals connect and understand one another.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts descriptive qualitative research in analysing interpersonal communication using two variables that are gender and social class. The Variationist Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Symbolic Interaction, Social Penetration Theory, and Attribution Theory are just a few of the theories that are included in this study. According to Bhandari (2023), qualitative research is acquiring and examining non-numerical data to gain an understanding of ideas, viewpoints, or experiences. Additionally, qualitative research provides a chance to develop new research concepts or to get a deeper grasp of a subject. Since conventional methods failed to fully represent the human experience, psychologists developed qualitative research to address this problem (Frost, n.d.). This study aims to investigate the interpersonal communication styles portrayed in the movie *Pride and Prejudice* and observe how these elements affect interpersonal interactions. Therefore, qualitative research is preferable since it offers a thorough examination and understanding of the problems from the perspectives of the characters.

Sampling

The setting of the film was made to occur during the late 19th century. Other than the 1980 and 1995 miniseries, "Pride & Prejudice" is considered to have been best adapted for the screen in 2005. As a result, it is imperative to research this particular adaptation and compare it to other novel adaptations, studying individual scenes or exchanges from the film provides a more thorough grasp of interpersonal communication. Purposive sampling, which includes choosing examples that have relevant information about the intended research topic, is used to examine the full movie.

Research Instrument

Data for this study were obtained from the script of *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), which was retrieved from a reliable online source. Specific inclusion criteria were established for the dialogue samples. Particular attention was given to conversations involving the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, with either her primary romantic interest (Mr. Darcy) or immediate family members. The exchanges explicitly manifested at least one of the four targeted interpersonal attributes, namely; non-verbal warmth, self-disclosure, de-penetration, or non-verbal cues. The script was examined in conjunction with the corresponding film scenes to ensure that the selected utterances were interpreted within their appropriate communicative contexts. The selected utterances were subsequently analysed using the chosen theoretical frameworks and the findings were interpreted to support the analysis and discussion of the study.

Data Analysis

In this study, the qualitative data analysis approach suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. Data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification made up the four primary components of the study framework. The analysis and interpretation of the data frequently used content analysis. To comply with the research aims, the researcher had to choose and emphasise selected related data. Finding systematic relationships and patterns in the data was made easier through data visualisation. The qualitative data were examined using content analysis to pinpoint particular expressions, themes, or ideas. In this study, gender or social class inequalities were examined by the researcher using content analysis to assess the verbal and non-verbal expressions made by the characters. Lastly, the researcher analysed the implications of the findings about the research questions and interpreted the meaning of the data studied.

Reliability and Validity

The ability of research techniques to consistently deliver the same results over time can be characterised as a research methodology (Mina, 2025). This suggests that regular assessments be made to confirm that the research methods produce reliable and consistent results, hence ensuring the research's dependability. The best way for evaluating the reliability of this study is internal consistency reliability, which makes sure that the internal research procedures are consistent. Middleton (2019) highlights how crucial it is to understand that accurate measurements might not always be dependable, and in this regard, validity is equally crucial.

A tool's validity refers to how well it measures the variables it was designed to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In simple terms, validity refers to the study's sincerity and dependability. When the measurement is accurate, the research findings can be trusted. As a result of this, if the analysis in this study produces accurate and trustworthy results, it means that validity has been attained, making the results beneficial for future research projects and replicable.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the verbal and non-verbal interpersonal communication attributes used in the film *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) based on gender and social class?

The researcher has chosen four distinct interpersonal communication attributes found in the theories and these attributes are found to be relevant towards this study. The attributes include non-verbal warmth, self-disclosure, de-penetration, and non-verbal cues. Table 1 provides a sample of data for the several interpersonal communication attributes that were used.

No.	Types of Interpersonal Communication Attributes	Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1	Non-verbal warmth	9	12.9
2	Self-disclosure	35	50
3	De-penetration	5	7.1

4	Non-verbal cues	21	30
Total		70	100

Table 1: Types of Interpersonal Communication Attributes found in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005)

Description:

Types of Interpersonal Communication Attributes:

NW = Non-verbal warmth

SD = Self-disclosure

DP = De-penetration

NC = Non-verbal cues

Table 1 gives an overview of how the attributes correlate with the production of interpersonal communication made by the characters, especially based on gender and social class. The findings show self-disclosure being the most prominent type of attribute made by the characters compared to the other attributes. It occurred 35 times out of the total of 70 data, which makes up a percentage of 50%. This means that the characters mostly share personal information with one another through self-disclosure. The second most significant attribute is non-verbal cues with the occurrence of 21 times or 30%. Both aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication can be seen to be highly used by the characters to express themselves. Next, non-verbal warmth ranked as the third attribute that was used out of the total, which occurred 9 times and makes the percentage of 12.9%. The attribute with the least number of occurrences and lies close to the fourth rank is de-penetration. The score for de-penetration came to a number of 5 times with a percentage of 7.1%.

Research Question 2: How do the interpersonal communication attributes in the film *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) affect the characters' relationship?

This section aims to analyse the chosen passages from the *Pride and Prejudice* film script, which respond to the second research question for this study. The analysis is divided into four sections according to the types of interpersonal communication attributes shown in Table 1. One sample is extracted from the script to further explain each attribute.

Non-verbal warmth

Example

Moments later. Elizabeth is standing in a small group with Jane, Bingley, Miss Bingley

and Darcy. Bingley can't keep his eyes off Jane, but is rightfully at a loss in disguising his instant ardour.

Elizabeth: How do you like it here in Hertfordshire, Mr. Bingley?

Mr. Bingley: **(smiling at Jane shyly)** Very much.

The extract above is a light conversation between Elizabeth and Mr Bingley during their initial interaction together at the public ball. As stated above, the script directs Mr Bingley as being attracted to Jane to the point that he could not look away from her. Jane had captured Mr Bingley's heart and attention the first time he saw her and it was clear to observe this admiration from him. Following that, Jane's sister, Elizabeth, asked Mr Bingley how he liked Hertfordshire so far to which he answered he gladly is while looking at Jane. This

interaction was made a few moments before Mr Bingley asked Jane for a dance and at this moment, the couple was still shy and new to each other.

The non-verbal warmth captured from this scene can be seen in the bolded sentence. The way Mr Bingley smiled shyly at Jane shows his intention to create a warm environment with her. From the perspective of social class, the social gap between Mr Bingley and Jane was not distinct even though both individuals came from different roots in life. Mr Bingley omitted the arrogant personality an upper-class person often would portray. Students from higher social classes exhibited increased overconfidence, according to experts (American Psychological Association, 2019). Moreover, Mr Bingley omitted the narcissistic behaviour that men project more than women. Waugh (2019) explained how a huge psychological study proved that men are more narcissistic than women due to feeling more entitled to power. From this example, Mr Bingley broke both of the common rules for social class and gender so that he could express warmth towards Jane. The positivity during this initial interaction encourages the relationship between Mr Bingley and Jane to be a place for both parties to foster their admiration towards one another.

Self-disclosure

Example

Darcy: I do not have the talent of conversing easily with people I have never met before.

Elizabeth: Maybe you should take your aunt's advice and practice.

The sample above is a conversation between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth at Lady Catherine's mansion when the Lady invited them for dinner. Before Darcy disclosed himself to Elizabeth, Sir Fitzwilliam asked Elizabeth how Darcy acted when he first arrived at Hertfordshire. Elizabeth proceeded to blatantly and lightly mention how Darcy showed no interest in dancing with any girl even though there was more than one lady who was sitting alone. Darcy must have felt taken aback and he wishes to justify his actions by disclosing how he is unfamiliar with engaging with people he meets for the first time.

During this point of Darcy and Elizabeth's relationship, they were still learning about each other and had met several times before. The number of meetings they have had may lead Darcy to easily share this piece of information about himself with Elizabeth. This is because research has shown that men have a harder time to self-disclose than women. In general, women tend to be more open about their personal lives than men (Dindia & Allen, 1992). However, self-disclosure can be risky for the sender of a message as the information is conveyed during an unsuitable time. In this case, Elizabeth had a different and more negative perception of Darcy. Thus, the reason why she replied bitterly to Darcy and suggests to improve his social speech behaviour by practising. Elizabeth's reply was intentionally sarcastic because Lady Catherine, who is Darcy's aunt, mentioned earlier how surprised she is with Elizabeth's family upbringing and the lack of education their parents provided to her sisters and her. Lady Catherine showed shocking expressions when she learned the ways of people's lives who came from lower social classes. In other words, Darcy's self-disclosure faced judgement by Elizabeth and instead of creating a closeness in their relationship, Elizabeth's remark may have dented Darcy's feelings.

De-penetration

Example

Bingley: Oh, she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld, but her sister Elizabeth is very agreeable.

They have stopped at the edge of the dance floor and have not seen Elizabeth and Charlotte who are standing close behind them. Elizabeth smirks as she overhears their conversation.

Darcy: Perfectly tolerable, I dare say, but not handsome enough to tempt me. Elizabeth's smile drops.

One example of de-penetration occurred when Elizabeth and Darcy met each other for the first time at the Netherfield ball. In this scene, Bingley and Darcy were highly admired by every girl in the room as both men come from a respectable family class and have wealthy fortunes, which makes them good candidates to marry to. Bingley had eyes for Elizabeth's sister, Jane, and he eventually mostly danced with her throughout the ball. Bingley suggests Elizabeth for Darcy's interest, to which Darcy then replies by insulting Elizabeth's looks and mentioning how she does not meet his high standards. Darcy carelessly voicing out his opinions at a public assembly has caused consequences for his and Elizabeth's relationship. As Elizabeth overheard this conversation, she made the conclusion that Darcy is a rude, arrogant, and prideful man, whom she has no interest in creating a meaningful relationship with. The difference between Elizabeth and Darcy in the prospect of gender and social class is majorly distinct here. This is because Darcy having the power to speak out his thoughts about Elizabeth shows that men hold greater authority than women because they are more likely to have these advantages than women. Moreover, his undesirability to dance with any girl at the ball proves his declining towards girls he feels are beneath him.

Non-verbal cues

Example

Elizabeth pays no attention to the following conversation, instead she is looking at Darcy who, in turn, is staring at Wickham. **They both obviously recognize each other and look very uncomfortable.**

Darcy turns and rides off without a word. Elizabeth looks at Wickham, puzzled.

One of the non-verbal cues presented in the film is during the unexpected meetup between Darcy and Bingley, with Wickham, Elizabeth, and the rest of Elizabeth's sisters at Meryton. In this scene, Elizabeth and her sisters are charmed by the good-looking and well-mannered officer named George Wickham. While Elizabeth was starting to learn more about Wickham, they came across Bingley and Darcy. Bingley greets them but has his attention more towards Jane. Elizabeth could not help but notice the strain and uncomfortable shift in the atmosphere between Darcy and Wickham. The uncomfortable weight proves to be more noticeable when Darcy left without even bidding goodbye.

The non-verbal cue conveyed by Darcy creates the assumption that Darcy and Wickham may have a dark history together. Elizabeth grew intrigued as to what had happened between the two men and she wondered why Darcy disliked Wickham since Wickham has been nothing but kind towards her. The film later on presents the true characteristic of Wickham which is manipulative and he has been taking Darcy for granted. Wickham has actually been wasting the inheritance he got from Darcy's fortune by gambling. This answers the reason why Darcy has acted the way he is in this scene. From the standpoint of gender differences, Elizabeth demonstrates the excellency of women reading non-verbal cues. Nelson (2022) states that according to research, women are more accurate at reading people than men are, and they also react to non-verbal signs more quickly.

DISCUSSION

Anchored by Social Penetration Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory, this study seeks to examine how gender and social class shape interactions in the *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) film. In response to Research Question 1, there were four significant attributes discovered: 1) non-verbal warmth, 2) self-disclosure, 3) de-penetration and 4) non-verbal cues. According to this study, both spoken and non-verbal forms were evident, however, verbal communication was demonstrated to be more persistent as a result of being influenced by distinct gender and social class displayed among characters. Meanwhile, in response to Research Question 2, the data establish that relationships were markedly influenced by communication. In light of there were times characters strengthened bonds or created conflicts as characters underwent communication growth throughout the process.

The findings indicate that verbal communication, particularly self-disclosure, demonstrated to be the most prevalent attribute utilized by the characters, despite that, non-verbal cues also serve a vital role in enhancing meaning and disclosing hidden emotions. In addressing Research Question 1, Elizabeth's approach to openly speaking, amidst social expectations, illustrates how gender and social class influence communication decisions, however, her verbal decisiveness both drew interest and created tension to Darcy.

In the context of Research Question 2, non-verbal signals, for instance facial expressions and body language were identified to be holding comparable significance, this is evident when Elizabeth examined Darcy's cues to reveal his true character which ultimately reshaped their relationship. Because non-verbal communication appears to be the majority of human interaction, its role in relationships in the film was stronger than verbal exchanges alone, depicting how both means of communication coordinated well in constructing character development and relational change.

Implications

By analysing attributes such as non-verbal cues and self-disclosure, this study offers insight on how communication processes are built through gender and social class, at the same time provides understanding on the historical language utilized in the film. According to McDermott (2023), effective communication assists individuals to navigate relational challenges more efficiently. In addition, George (2023) established that involvement with research may enlarge perspectives and enhance innovative thinking. Together, these approaches indicate that interpreting interpersonal communication not only improves linguistic fields but also supplies individuals with strategies to cultivate healthier and more robust relationships in society.

RECOMMENDATION

Several limitations were encountered during the completion of this study. The first limitation involves researchers' subjectivity and perspective in data selection. As the dialogue samples were selected, analysed and interpreted solely by the researchers, bias or subjective inaccuracy exist, which may affect the overall trustworthiness of the findings. Future studies involving multiple coders could help mitigate this bias and ensure more filtered data verification. Also, this study is firmly bounded to the structural variables of gender and socioeconomic class in shaping conversation dynamics. Due to scope constraints, other sociolinguistic factors such as historical context, age variance, personality differences, shifting power relations, and broader cultural expectations were not examined in detail. Thus, the findings primarily reflect immediate interpersonal dynamics rather than universal communication patterns, highlighting a clear avenue for future research to incorporate these multifaceted social dimensions. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the empirical data pool beyond a single text, by investigating interpersonal communication across multiple films, literary adaptations, or real-life conversations. Doing so provides a more comprehensive understanding of modern sociolinguistic patterns and interpersonal attributes.

The second limitation is the lack of prior research on the subject. Even though the film was released in 2005, there was only a little past research paper that discusses the interpersonal communication conveyed by the characters. In addition, since the film was set during the late century, the researchers find it difficult at times to decipher the meaning behind the characters' utterances. Thus, to improve for future research, the individual must be capable of understanding early modern language and have the skill in searching for past research papers.

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