DOI: 10.13129/2240-7715/2026.1. 71 - 110

Maria Grazia Busà, Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed Said
Università degli Studi di Padova

Pragmatic Strategies of Nigerian and Cameroonian migrants in Italy

Abstract

This study addresses the communication strategies of Nigerian and Cameroonian migrants in Italy, with a focus on the directness and indirectness of their verbal message across different communicative situations. Based on Hall's (1976) cultural framework and Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, the study investigates how the sociocultural values of Nigerian and Cameroonian societies as well as variables such as social hierarchy, social distance, and addressee gender affect the selection of Nigerian and Cameroonian speakers' communication strategies and style. 18 participants (10 Nigerians and 8 Cameroonians) were interviewed and administrated a multiple-choice questionnaire (Ogiermann, 2018) to elicit responses across six communicative situations: advice, apology, cancellation, refusal, request, and reply to information request. The initial interview reveals that participants are aware of the existence of communication and cultural differences between the Italian society and their countries, making their integration difficult. Moreover, the multiple-choice questionnaire reveals that participants use a hybrid communication style, drawing on both direct and indirect strategies depending on the communicative situation. However, indirect communication strategies were used more frequently than the direct ones. Indirectness was found to be statistically significant in advice, request, and reply to information request, but not in apology, cancellation, and refusal. The addressee gender was the strongest predictor of communication style: participants were significantly more likely to use indirect strategies when addressing male interlocutors than female ones, an asymmetry that was further affected by the familiarity with the interlocutor. This tendency is due to the fact that females are considered weak and cannot participate in social decisions, which are reserved for males, who are recognized to be the source of social power and leadership due to the patriarchal nature of these societies (Gardiner, 1998, Yaw Oppong, 2013, Awoniyi, 2015). These results are consistent with the postcolonial pragmatics literature and with the patriarchal values characteristic of sub-Saharan African societies (Anchimbe, 2018).

1. Introduction

Sub-Saharan migration to Italy began in the 1970s, but in the light of recent geopolitical events such as the Arab Spring and political conflicts in Africa in the 2010s, about 685,000 migrants reached Italy through the Mediterranean between 2013 and 2018 (Zannoni, 2020). The process of migrant integration includes, among other things, overcoming barriers related to language and education, and identifying with the social values of the host country. Teaching migrants the host country's language, as well as promoting their native cultures, is part of the European Council's 1990s recommendations (e.g., Bianco and Ortiz Cobo, 2020). Language learning is not limited to grammar and vocabulary; it is strongly connected to personal, social, and cultural experiences (Pasquarella et al., 2025). Understanding the migrants' communication and cultural patterns and how they differ from those of the society where migrants arrive is crucial for the migrants' integration. However, few studies have been carried out that focus on sociocultural differences between the migrants and the host societies, as well as the dynamics of intercultural communication. This paper contributes to filling this gap by presenting an analysis of the pragmatic and Communication Strategies of Nigerian and Cameroonian migrants in Italy and of how these Strategies are rooted in the sociocultural differences between Sub-Saharan Africans and Italians.

This study is funded by the FAMI POLIS (2021-2027) project of the Veneto Region

2. Framework

In his book 'Beyond Culture', Hall (1976) conceptualized the cross-cultural variation in the amount of contextual information that interactants from different cultural backgrounds convey when communicating. He distinguished between two kinds of cultures: high context and low context cultures.

According to this distinction, high context cultures are those where people prioritize sharing interpersonal relations with the extended family, friends and colleagues. People show commitment to social duties and mutual support, and personal relations depend on trust. Decision making is hierarchal in terms of responsibility and distribution of roles. Also, to maintain social harmony people avoid confrontation and direct criticism and so tend to provide vague and indirect verbal messages. Thus, communication style is implicit and indirect and relies heavily on the integration of nonverbal cues, the interpretation of meanings from the shared context, and reading the meaning between the lines. Silence may carry communicative meanings, as it may be used, for example, to avoid expressing disapproval or refusal. Many Asian, African, including Arabic, Mediterranean and Latin American countries are said to belong to this type of culture.

On the other hand, in low context cultures, people tend to be individualistic, and social ties are weak. People show lower commitment to social obligations, and decisions are based on explicit rules, contracts and agreements. Authority and responsibility are distributed across levels. Direct confrontation and criticism are encouraged, and the clarity and transparency of the message are a priority.

Communication styles are explicit and direct and rely heavily on the content of the verbal message to the detriment of the non-verbal message. Examples of these cultures are the USA and the UK, the Scandinavian countries, Germany and Switzerland.

Because of the differences in Communication styles, as well as in the reliance on explicit vs implicit information, the interactions between speakers from high-context and low-context cultures may pave the way for miscommunication and misunderstandings. This is often the case when migrants from high-context cultures interact with people from host countries in the West, where communication tends to be more explicit and direct as compared to the migrants' communication, which is often more implicit and indirect.

It has been suggested that sub-Saharan societies should be grouped with high context and collectivist cultures (Hall, 1976, Hofstede, 1980). Thus, according to Hall and Hofstede's categorization, sub-Saharan speakers should use communication patterns that are implicit and indirect, with variations due to the status of the interlocutor. However, to the authors' knowledge, no study has empirically investigated the nature of the verbal message by Sub-Saharan African migrants in Italy, which is the aim of the present paper.

3. Cultural values of Sub-Saharan societies

Some grounding social and cultural values of sub-Saharan African societies include group identity, communalism, respect for authority, morality, human rights, and knowledge and aesthetics. These can be characterized as described below.

1. Group identity. People are seen as embedded entities in the collective group (e.g., Schwartz, 2006, Yaw Oppong, 2013). This can be explained through the philosophy of Ubuntu, which means 'I am because we are'. Ubuntu philosophy affirms both individual and group well-being. People identify themselves as a part of the group and seek relationships and a sense of belonging in the group; individualism is seen as the absence of caring and generosity (Yaw Oppong, 2013).

Moreover, wealth is not viewed as pertaining to the individual but rather shared in the extended family context; decisions are taken through consultation with elders, community leaders and family members; finally, because people rely on ties such as family and society, trust, even in business, is social and personal rather than dependent on a sophisticated institutional system

2. *Communalism*. Communalism emphasizes social life, mutual responsibility, interdependence, and solidarity. For instance, childcare and upbringing are the responsibility of the extended community and not only of the biological parents.

Community members are linked by strong ties, family is paramount, and marriage is seen to establish kinship networks (Yaw Oppong, 2013, Awoniyi, 2015). Total individualism is considered destructive for human values; however, balanced individuality is recognized (Awoniyi, 2015). As for the economy, traditional African societies believe in the fair distribution of wealth; both personal and tribal wealth is valued (Awoniyi, 2015).

3. Respect for authority: this value reflects the importance of social power, specifically, authority and leadership are associated with elderly age, wisdom and trust (Yaw Oppong, 2013, Awoniyi, 2015), as old people are considered wise, play a role in mediating between society members and provide advice and consultation (Yaw Oppong, 2013). The attitude towards authority is 'almost subservience' (Gardiner, 1998, Yaw Oppong, 2013). Females are regarded as weak and inferior to men; they are not consulted in important social decisions and cannot go to war (Yaw Oppong, 2013).

4. Morality. Morality is a social and non-individualistic value, it is based on ethical conduct and good character, which are prioritized over excessive individual rights (Awoniyi, 2015).

5. *Human rights*. Human rights include dignity, equality, protection from hardship, access to land and food, fair trials, and property ownership, which are provided by social customs rather than enforced (Gyekye, 2002; Awoniyi, 2015).

6. Knowledge and Aesthetics. Wisdom, especially practical and empirical, is a fundamental value for societal reconstruction and human well-being. Beauty is extended beyond art to human conduct and character. Appropriateness and fittingness in art are essential for moral and social harmony (Awoniyi, 2015).

Of these values the first three, i.e., group identity, communalism, and respect for authority, clearly reflect two of the basic cultural dimensions elaborated by Hofstede (1980), that is collectivism and high-power distance. In this perspective, it is expected that the speech of Nigerians and Cameroonians will show characteristics of indirectness and implicitness, particularly when speakers address interlocutors having higher power in the social hierarchy. Also, based on what reported in 3 above, when addressing women, interlocutors may use a more direct, explicit communication style. This is investigated in the present study. As for cultural differences between Nigerians and Cameroonians, a study by Woldu (2001) on the cultural dimensions in four sub-Saharan countries, namely Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa, as compared to the USA, points to the existence of

differences among the four African cultures, though they share geographical proximity and a colonial history. However, the African cultures appeared more collectivist, more hierarchical, more relationship-oriented, and more accepting of unequal power distribution as compared to the US.

4. Communication patterns in Cameroon and Nigeria

Cameroon and Nigeria are highly multilingual societies, with over 250 languages spoken in Cameroon and over 500 in Nigeria (Wikipedia, sub voce). Little research has been carried out on the communication patterns characterizing Cameroon and Nigeria; yet there seems to be consensus that language use and pragmatics reflect the countries postcolonial histories, with influences from Western colonizers languages and societies (i.e., English and French) (Anchimbe, 2018).

In his analysis of the pragmatic aspects of World (postcolonial) Englishes, Anchimbe (2018) suggests that language use and pragmatics reflect the social expectations of the participants in the communication. In other words, communication is influenced by sociocultural variables such as social hierarchy and social distance between the interactants, profession, gender, age, and being ingroup/outgroup.

Social hierarchy, or social power, and social distance appear to play a major role in determining speakers' Communication styles. Anchimbe (2018) analyzed the pragmatics of offers and offer requests in the English spoken by Ghana and Cameroon speakers and found that differences exist, with respect to Western traditions, in the way in which offers and offer requests are realized. For instance, for Ghana and Cameroon speakers an offer is not a single pragmatic act, but it is composed of phases: initially the speaker starts by starting a conversation or making a preparatory movement to familiarize with the interlocutor and establish a relation to maximize the chance of acceptance; it is only then that the speech act is performed. Mulo Farenkia (2016) analyzed requests in Cameroonian French and found that speakers make wide use of honorifics, greetings, and compliments.

Kouega (2018) analyzed conversation requests between equals in Cameroon Pidgin English and found that the most frequent Communication Strategies included explicitly stating the content of the message with forms of politeness (e.g., 'Could you', 'I would') while providing explanations when the addressee asks for more information. Apuge and Warda (2021) analyzed 240 requests in Cameroon English and found that the general tendency is to make use of conventional indirectness. Avodo (2024) investigated how Cameroonian and Chadian speakers of French make use of direct and indirect communication in conveying claims and found that Cameroonians tend to be more indirect than Chadians. Gut and Unuabonah (2022) examined request Strategies in Nigerian and British English and found that the

nature of the verbal message was affected by contextual factors such as social distance and social power. Similarly, Gut et al. (2024) showed that in Nigerian English, the Communication style used for offers is influenced by the interlocutors' social status and social distance, and that it is also characterized by multiple pragmatic movements. For instance, with equals, when offering help, preparatory movements such as greetings are preferred; with superiors, in addition to preparatory movements, acts expressing commitment and willingness are used. The purpose of supportive and preparatory movements is to increase their chance of being accepted.

Formal language is used with people with high social distance, but kinship words may be used to reduce the distance, create a space for familiarity and collaboration or to mark the symmetry/asymmetry of a relationship. For instance, in Cameroon, the word 'my uncle' may be used with strangers out of the context of family to emphasize a close relationship, 'brother' or 'sister' or 'my son' may be used to signal a symmetrical or asymmetrical relationship. Words like 'sir' and 'brother' are used frequently since these societies are highly patriarchal (Anchimbe, 2018).

In addition to the use of kinship terms, Cameroonian English also makes use of titles (e.g., 'sir'), lexical modifiers (e.g., 'kindly', 'just'), conditional structures ('if'-clauses), modal verbs ('can', 'will'), repetition of 'please', and providing explanations or reasons, which are used as internal and external modifiers to soften the request and mark deference (Nkemleke, 2008).

Language is expected to be indirect with superiors but direct and even impositive with inferiors. Gender plays an important role in society as traditional cultural norms often expect women to show deference and respect for men in social interactions. Anchimbe (2018) shows that in interactions female speakers tend to do two things at the same time: they acknowledge the traditional expectation that women should be shy and accept offers and limit this expectation by saying that not all offers should be accepted. The point is that they are not obeying or rejecting the norm but are negotiating it. This reflects a hybrid communication style, were women balance respect for cultural expectations with personal judgment.

Because women in society tend to be considered weaker or inferior to men (see section 2 above), men speaking to women may use a more direct language than when speaking to men.

Age is very important in defining the communication style and the addressee form, for instance, in Nigeria and Cameroon, the social norm is to address elderly people by an honorific title and not by their name. Thus, during their life, the same person may be addressed as 'Auntie' or 'Tants', 'Ma' and 'Gran'.

Face is an important concept in Sub-Saharan cultures, as it is in many collectivistic societies. Face is given outmost importance in relation to the linguistic, ethnic and social group, as face is social and collective; instead, an individual's face per se has secondary importance. Behaviors or communications that do not conform with the group's expectations might threaten the interlocutor's face and damage the individual's relations with the group or the society.

Overall, the studies point to different Strategies for politeness in the postcolonial cultures as compared to Western cultures. In these societies, they use a hybrid system of communication reflecting both folk and contact with the West.

Understanding the communication dynamics and cultural implications of Nigerian and Cameroonian migrants in Italy and how they differ from that of native speakers of Italian is a key factor in the promotion of migrants' inclusion and integration in the social context and the labor market in Italy. Still, too often Italian language courses targeted to migrants focus on basic grammatical structures and lexicon, neglecting oral communication and the pragmatics aspects of the language, which are equally, if not more, important in social situations and for the job market (Bianco and Ortiz Cobo, 2019). In fact, having poor communication skills increases the difficulty of social interactions and may make migrants feel marginalized and excluded from the society (Ghio et al., 2022).

5. Research Questions

The present study was aimed at investigating the communication dynamics of Nigerian and Cameroonian migrants in their interactions with Italian speakers. The following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the communication strategies of Nigerians and Cameroonians?

2. Is the communication style of Nigerians and Cameroonians direct and indirect?

3. Do sociocultural factors such as social hierarchy, social distance and gender impact on speakers' communication style and make it more/less direct and more/less explicit?

6. Methodology

The study analyses the responses to an interview of 10 Nigerian and 8 Cameroonian migrants (see Table 1). The participants were contacted through local institutions such as non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide migrants with social, linguistic and legal support. All migrants take part in cultural, sport, linguistic and social activities organized by local associations and receive legal support from the local NGOs or governmental offices.

The study was introduced informally to migrants in English or French by the second author, and the interviews were conducted with people who agreed to participate in the study spontaneously and on a voluntary basis. The interview included initial questions to obtain the participants' personal information, including their country of origin, age, years of residence in Italy and level of education. A second set of questions related to the participants' perception of the Italian culture and its differences from their home culture. The final part of the interview consisted of a multiple-choice questionnaire (based on Ogiermann, 2018). The interview is reported in the Appendix.

1. Socio-demographic data of the respondents

The socio-demographic data of the respondents are shown in Table 1. As the Table shows, the participants were largely males (16 out of 18), as a very limited number of women participated in the activities organized by the associations we contacted. Also, for the most part (16 out of 18), the participants had come to Italy as asylum seekers and had been in Italy for more than 3 years.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants (N = 18)

Variable	**Category**	**n**	**%**
Gender	m	16	88.9
Gender	f	2	11.1
Nationality	Nigeria	10	55.6
Nationality	Cameroon	8	44.4
Education	Primary / No schooling	9	50.0
Education	Professional / Diploma	4	22.2
Education	BA / MA degree	4	22.2
Education	Incomplete university	1	5.6
Years in Italy	≤ 3 years	16	88.9
Years in Italy	> 3 years	2	11.1
Purpose of residence	Asylum seeker	16	88.9
Purpose of residence	Work	1	5.5
Purpose of residence	Family	1	5.5

2. Multiple-Choice questionnaire

To examine the communication style used by the participants in different kinds of pragmatic situations, a repeated measure design, namely a Multiple-Choice Questionnaire, was set up (based on Ogiermann, 2018). The aim was to investigate

the nature of Nigerians' and Cameroonians' communication considering what has been reported in the literature. The questionnaire described everyday life situations and asked participants to choose which of 5 alternatives would be the most likely response in that kind of situation.

The questionnaire was designed to investigate speech acts using a multiple-choice format. It presented the following 6 different communicative situations (Roever, 2006).

1. Refusal scenarios (5 items): The participants were presented with invitations or requests that required them to select a refusal strategy.

2. Request scenarios (5 items): The participants were asked to reply to requests for help or favors.

3. Apology scenarios (5 items): The participants were presented with situations in which they caused some moral or material damage to the addressee, and they had to apologize.

4. Advice scenarios (4 items): The participants were presented with situations in which their addressee confided to them a personal or a professional problem, and the participants had to give some advice.

5. Reply to information request: The participants were presented with situations in which they were asked to provide suggestions or information.

6. Cancellation scenarios (5 items): The participants had to cancel a planned commitment or promised action.

The questionnaire also contained general questions on social norms and attitudes (10 items for the Nigerians and 9 items for the Cameroonians), which were included as a baseline control (Taguchi, 2005).

The questions were aimed at assessing how the participants' communication style might be impacted by interactions with speakers showing differences in social hierarchy/power status, social distance and gender. These three variables were elaborated based on the cultural values outlined in Section 2, and particularly the first 3, that is group identity, communalism, and respect for authority. In particular, the study examined whether differences in the interactants' social hierarchy/power status, social distance and gender would cause the speaker to switch from more to less indirect and implicit communication. The variables were tested within subject.

The questionnaire included 17 low-status and 20–21 high-status situations, 15 low-distance and 22–23 high-distance interactions, 18 situations involving male addressees and 15 situations involving female addressees

The questionnaire was adapted to the specific religious, cultural and linguistic background of the participant. For instance, for people from a Christian background the questionnaire referred to situations within the Christian culture, such as Sunday prayers or Christmas; for people from a Muslim background, the situations regarded the Islamic culture, such Friday prayers, fasting (e.g., Ramadan) etc. The purpose was to provide contexts that could happen in daily life and that the participants were familiar with.

All questionnaire items were randomized. The interviews were carried out in English and French to avoid possible ambiguities caused by Italian L2, as many participants were new arrivals who do not have a complete command of Italian. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and took place between the participants and the second author, who has a good command of English and French. The participants' communication strategies were classified into 14 subcategories (1-7 Strategies = direct, 7-14= indirect). These are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of Communication Strategies

Number of categories	**Type of category**	**Subcategories**	**Exemplification**
1	Direct	Explicit communication of intention	I tell her NO because I don't like it
2	Direct	Conveying the communicative message explicitly and providing an alternative	I tell her that I do not where the post office is and offer her help
3	Direct	Rejection or cancellation of an invitation with notification	I do not show up but I give her a notification
4	Direct	Rejection without a justification	I reject the suggestion without giving explanation
5	Direct	Rejection/cancellation of an invitation providing an alternative	I call to cancel the appointment but suggest to meat another day

6	Direct	Inability/unwillingness to reject/object an offer or a request for pragmatic or cultural reasons	I do not like to participate but I show up
7	Direct	On bold escalation	I refuse to wait for my appointment, and I get angry with her
8	Indirect	Verbal agreement followed by a nonverbal noncompliance	I confirm the appointment, but I do not show up
9	Indirect	Conveying approximate, imprecise, vague information	Saying 'Maybe' instead of saying NO
10	Indirect	Not doing something and providing no notification for it	I do not show up without notifying it
11	Indirect	Providing indirect advice	When wife does not speak Italian very well because she does not practice it, the speaker reaction would be 'I tell my wife that practicing Italian helps a lot' instead of directly confront her of the fact
12	Indirect	Intervention of a third party to help or mediate.	When somebody has some problems with his manager, his reaction would be 'I ask my friend to speak with her' instead of directly speaking with her

			instead of criticizing not practicing.
13	Indirect	Offering help or an alternative	When wife does not speak Italian very well because she does not practice it, the speaker reaction would be 'I suggest practicing Italian together and I do not comment' instead of criticizing not practicing.
14	Indirect	Changing discourse topic to avoid confrontation	When somebody arrives late at work, his reaction would be 'I make some joke to change topic, and I do not apologize' instead of stating being wrong and asking for apology

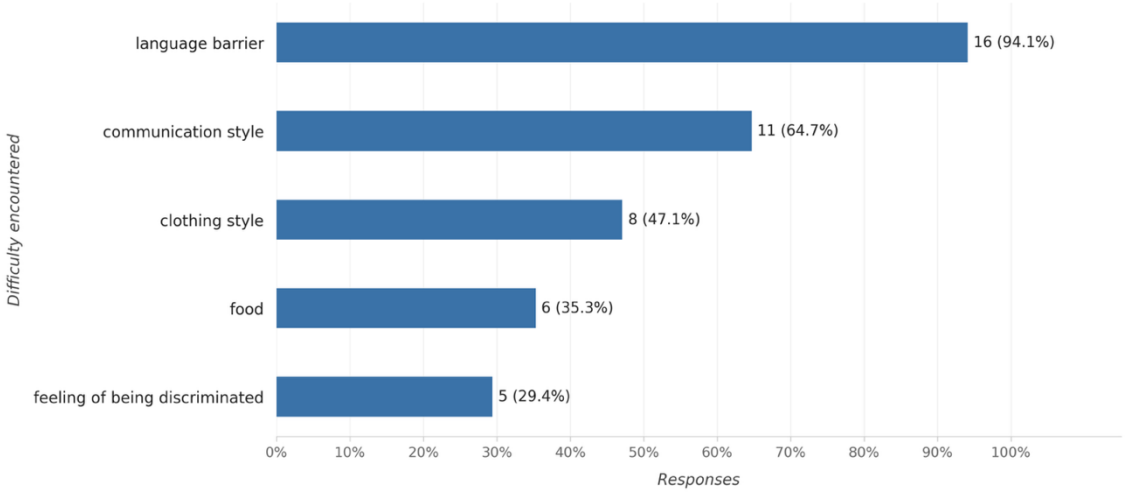
7. Results

1, Preliminary interview

The participants reported difficulties and differences from the Italian society in terms of language and communication, as well as social practices. As shown in Figure 1, language represents the participants' greatest difficulty in the Italian society (16 individuals, 94.1%). The second difficulty is represented by communication (12 individuals, 66.7%): the participants claim that in their country it is easier to communicate or to start a conversation with somebody. For instance, a Cameroonian participant said, 'Once I needed to ask directions from somebody in the street, but I received no answer when I spoke in English', and he mentioned that he interpreted this as a discriminatory action. Another person from Cameroon said, 'In my country, you can say hello causally to anybody; here, people are stricter'. The participants also reported being affected by differences in sociocultural practices, such as clothing (8 individuals, 44.4%) and food (6 individuals, 33.3%). For instance, many Nigerian informants said that, as compared to Nigeria, women's clothing style

in Italy is 'does not show good manners. Finally, 5 individuals (27.8%) reported feeling discriminated against.

Figure 1. Sociocultural difficulties in the Italian society reported by the migrants



2. Questionnaire

2.1. Communication strategies

The participants appeared to use different communication styles in different communicative situations. The results of the analysis are presented below (Table 3).

Table 3. Communication strategies across the communicative situations

Communication Strategy	advice	apology	cancellation	refusal	request	reply to information request	sociocultural interaction
Explicit communication of intention	48.6	2.2	26.7	30.3	11.1	27.8	8.7
Explicit message with alternative	0.0	54.4	1.1	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.2
Rejection or cancellation with notification	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Rejection without justification	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5
Rejection or cancellation with alternative	0.0	0.0	1.11	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Inability or unwillingness to reject an offer or a request for pragmatic or cultural reasons	0.0	0.0	35.6	47.2	33.3	0.0	52.6
On bold escalation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0

Verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance	0.0	0.0	11.1	5.6	11.1	2.8	9.3
Providing vague or imprecise information	11.1	1.1	11.1	16.9	35.6	4.2	5.2
No action with no notification	2.78	1.1	7.8	0.0	6.7	2.8	15.6
Providing indirect advice	31.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0
Third-party mediation	1.39	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Offering help or an alternative	4.2	41.1	5.6	0.0	0.0	61.1	0.0
Changing the topic to avoid confrontation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

In *Advice,* the most frequent strategy was *explicit communication of intention* (48.6%), followed by *providing indirect advice* (31.9%) *conveying approximate, imprecise or vague information* (11.1%), and offering help or alternative (4.2%).

Some examples of the strategies used by the participants in *advice* are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of participants' strategies in *Advice*

Strategy	Example
Explicit communication of intention	Your wife had vision problems, did not properly follow the doctor's instructions, and is still unwell, but she believes the treatment is not working well. What would be your reaction in this situation? I tell her that she did not follow the medical instructions (40-year-old Nigerian man)
Providing indirect advice	A friend says he cannot learn Italian because it is too difficult, but you know he does not practice much. How would you behave in this situation? I say that practice helps a lot. (31-year-old Nigerian man)
Conveying approximate, imprecise or vague information	Your friend was fired from his job because he was always late, but he believes there are other reasons. What would be your reaction in this situation? I tell him that I agree with him that there are other reasons (31-year-old Nigerian man)

Offering help or alternative	On the street, an elegant woman asks you where the post office is, but you don't know. How would you react in this situation? I try to find the way with her. (28-year-old Cameroonian man)

In *Apology,* the most frequent strategy was *explicit communication of communicative intention* (54.4%), followed by *offering help or an alternative* (41.1%). Some examples are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Examples of participants' strategies in *Apology*

Strategy	Example
Explicit communication of communicative intention	On the bus you did not validate your ticket, but the inspector told you that you should have done it. What could be your response in a situation like this? To avoid the fine, I apologize, admit that I made a mistake, and try to be polite. (35-year-old Nigerian man)
Offering help or an alternative	At work, you were supposed to arrive at 8 a.m. to do the shift handover with your colleague, but you arrived at 9 and made him wait for an hour. What could be your response in a situation like this? I apologize and tell him that during his next shift, I will work an extra hour for him (40-year-old Nigerian man)

In *Cancellation* the most frequent Strategy was *inability/unwillingness to reject/object an offer or a request for pragmatic or cultural reasons* (35.6%), followed by *explicit communication of intention* (26.7%), *verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance* (11.1%) and *conveying approximate, imprecise or vague information* (11.1%), *not doing something and providing no notification* (7.8%) and *offering help or an alternative* (5.6%). Some examples are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Examples of participants' strategies in *Cancellation*

Strategy	Example
Inability/unwillingness to reject/object an offer or a request for pragmatic or cultural reasons	A month ago, you confirmed a vaccination appointment at the hospital, but now you no longer want to do it. How would you cancel this commitment? I go to the appointment because the vaccine is important. (28-year-old Cameroonian man)
Explicit communication of intention	You agreed to your colleague's request to work the Sunday shift in her place, but you need to cancel because your family wants you to go to church with them. What could be your reaction to cancel in a situation like this? I tell her that I must go to church to pray and therefore I cannot go. (57-year-old Nigerian man)
Verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance	You told your friend that you would accompany him to get his health card, but your wife asked you to go grocery shopping with her. How would you cancel this commitment? I do not go and I do not inform him, but I call later to justify myself. (30-year-old Nigerian man)
Not doing something and providing no notification	You told your friend that you would accompany him to get his health card, but your wife asked you to go grocery shopping with her. How would you cancel this commitment? I do not show up without notifying him. (23-year-old Cameroonian man)
Offering help or an alternative	A month ago, you confirmed a vaccination appointment at the hospital, but now you do not want to do it anymore. How would you cancel this commitment? I call to ask to move the appointment to a later date.

	(37-year-old Cameroonian man)

As for *Refusal*, the most frequent strategy was *inability or unwillingness to reject for pragmatic or cultural reasons* (47.2%), followed by *explicit communication of intention* (30.3%), *vague or imprecise information* (16.9%) and verbal *agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance* (5.6%). Some examples are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Examples from participants' strategies in *Refusal*

Strategy	Example
Inability/unwillingness to reject/object an offer or a request for pragmatic or cultural reasons	You are invited to your friend's wedding, and you confirmed your presence, but due to family reasons you cannot attend. How would you cancel this commitment? I am sorry to go, but I go anyway. (30-year-old Nigerian man)
Explicit communication of intention	Your friend invites you to dinner, but you do not want to go because you must go out with your wife. What could be your response in a situation like this? I tell him no because I must go out with my wife (57-year-old Nigerian man)
Vague or imprecise information	Your friend invites you to dinner, but you do not want to go because you must go out with your wife. What could be your response in a situation like this? I make up an excuse so that I do not go to dinner. (32-year-old Nigerian man)
Verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance	A social worker asks you to come back the next day to bring additional documents, but you cannot go because you must work. How would you behave in a situation like this? I say yes, but the next day I call and say that something unexpected happened and I justify myself. (31-year-old Nigerian man)

In *Requests*, the most frequent responses were *vague or imprecise information* (35.6%), *inability or unwillingness to reject for pragmatic or cultural reasons* (33.3%), *verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance* (11.1%), *explicit communication of intention* (11.1%), and *no action and no notification* (6.7%). Some examples are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Examples of participants' strategies in *Requests*

Strategy	Example
Vague or imprecise information	In a restaurant, you want to change the dish you ordered because you do not like it. What could be your response in a situation like this? I say that the dish is very good, but I cannot eat it for health reasons. (27-year-old Nigerian man)
Inability or unwillingness to reject for pragmatic or cultural reasons	You need to ask your employer for a day off because your friend is coming to visit you, but many colleagues are already away. What could be your behavior in a situation like this? I go to work even though I am sorry about it. (31-year-old Nigerian man)
Verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance	You need to renew your health card, but at the office the clerk told you that all appointments are next month, while you would like to do it now instead of waiting until next month. What could be your response in a situation like this? I say that it is fine, and then I return at another time to speak with the manager, or I try to get an appointment somewhere else. (40-year-old Nigerian man)
Explicit communication of intention	Your friend invites you to dinner, but you do not want to go because you must go out with your wife. What could be your response in a situation like this? I tell him no because I must go out with my wife.

	(31-year-old Nigerian man)
No action and no notification	At the municipal office, you are registering your residence, but you discover that you forgot your passport at home. What would be your reaction in this situation? I do not ask for anything and go back home to bring the passport quickly (32-year-old Nigerian man)

As for the *Reply to information request,* the most frequent responses were *offering help or an alternative* (61.1%), *explicit communication of intention* (27.8%), *providing vague or imprecise information* (4.2%), and *no action and notification* (2.8%). Some examples are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Examples of participants' strategies in *Information requests*

Strategy	Example
Offering help or an alternative	On the street, an elegant woman asks you where the post office is, but you do not know. What would be your reaction in this situation? I try to look on my phone to see where the post office is and then tell her. (37-year-old Cameroonian man)
Explicit communication of intention	Your new colleague asks you how to register vacation days in the company system, but you have never done it. What would be your reaction in this situation? I tell him that I have never done it. (40-year-old Nigerian man)
Providing vague or imprecise information	Your boss has introduced a new product in the shop. No customer has bought it because the price is higher compared to other shops, but he believes that the new product is cheap. What would be your reaction in this situation? I tell him that the product and its price are very competitive. (37-year-old Cameroonian man)
No action and notification	The doctor asks you how many times a day you took the medication he

	prescribed, but you forgot to take it. What would be your reaction in this situation? I do not say anything because I know that I made a mistake. (32-year-old Nigerian man)

Finally, about *Sociocultural interaction,* the most frequent Strategies were *inability or unwillingness to reject for pragmatic or cultural reasons* (52.6%), *no action and no notification* (15.6%), *verbal agreement followed nonverbal noncompliance* (9.3%), *explicit communication of intention* (8.7%), and *vague or imprecise information* (5.2%). Some examples are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Examples of participants' strategies in *Sociocultural interaction*

Strategy	Example
Inability or unwillingness to reject for pragmatic or cultural reasons	Your child's teacher asked you to bring your child to participate in a socialization activity during the weekend. What would be your reaction in this situation? I accept and accompany my child because the activity is important. (30-year-old Cameroonian man)
No action and no notification	On public transport, you are seated and an elderly woman gets on but cannot find a seat and remains standing. What would be your reaction in this situation? I do not offer anything and remain seated, but if she comes to ask, I say yes. (32-year-old Nigerian man)
Verbal agreement followed nonverbal noncompliance	Your boss criticizes you in front of your colleagues because you arrived late, but you were late due to traffic. What would be your reaction in this situation? I listen to the criticism and then speak to him in private. (23-year-old Cameroonian man)
Explicit communication of intention	Your boss decided to transfer you to work in a department outside the city where you live without asking for your opinion or giving you prior notice, and you do not want to be transferred.

	What would be your reaction in this situation? I tell him that I do not agree and that he should have consulted me first. (30-year-old Cameroonian man)
Vague or imprecise information	You are in a bar, and a woman comes very close to you while talking, much closer than what you are used to. What would be your reaction in this situation? I try to say in an indirect way that I am not comfortable. (26-year-old Cameroonian man)

2.2 Use of direct vs indirect communication style

Figure 2 shows the percentages of direct and indirect responses in the various communicative situations. The percentages are reported with 95% confidence intervals (CIs), which estimate the margin of error on an observation, allowing predictions about the true value in the population from a single sample; when two CIs do not overlap, the proportions are considered significantly different (Wallis 2013). In our sample, direct replies were more frequent in *Refusal* (direct 76.4%, 95% CI [66.6, 84.0], *n* = 68/89 vs indirect: 23.6%, 95% CI [16.0, 33.4], *n* = 21/89); *Sociocultural interaction* (direct 68.2%, 95% CI [60.9, 74.7], *n* = 118/173 vs indirect 31.8%, 95% CI [25.3, 39.1], *n* = 55/173), *Cancellation* (direct: 64.4%, 95% CI [54.2, 73.6], *n* = 58/90 vs indirect: 35.6%, 95% CI [26.4, 45.8], *n* = 32/90). These communicative situations showed no overlap, suggesting that direct Strategies were reliably selected, as shown in Figure 2. Direct replies were also more frequently used in *Apology* (direct: 56.7%, 95% CI [46.4, 66.4], *n* = 51/90; indirect: 43.3%, 95% CI [33.6, 53.6], *n* = 39/90); however, the overlap of confidence intervals suggests a moderate preference. On the other hand, the participants were more frequently indirect in *Reply to information request* (72.2%, 95% CI [61.0, 81.2], *n* = 52/72 vs direct 27.8%, 95% CI [18.8, 39.0], *n* = 20/72); and they showed a moderate tendency towards indirectness with a nearly balanced use of both strategies in *Advice* (indirect: 51.4%, 95% CI [40.1, 62.6], *n* = 37/72; vs direct: 48.6%, 95% CI [37.4, 59.9], *n* = 35/72) and *Request* (indirect: 52.2%, 95% CI [42.0, 62.2], *n* = 47/90; direct: 47.8%, 95% CI [37.8, 58.0], *n* = 43/90) as shown by the confidence interval values.

Figure 2. Percentage of direct and indirect responses in the various communication situations with 95% CIs value

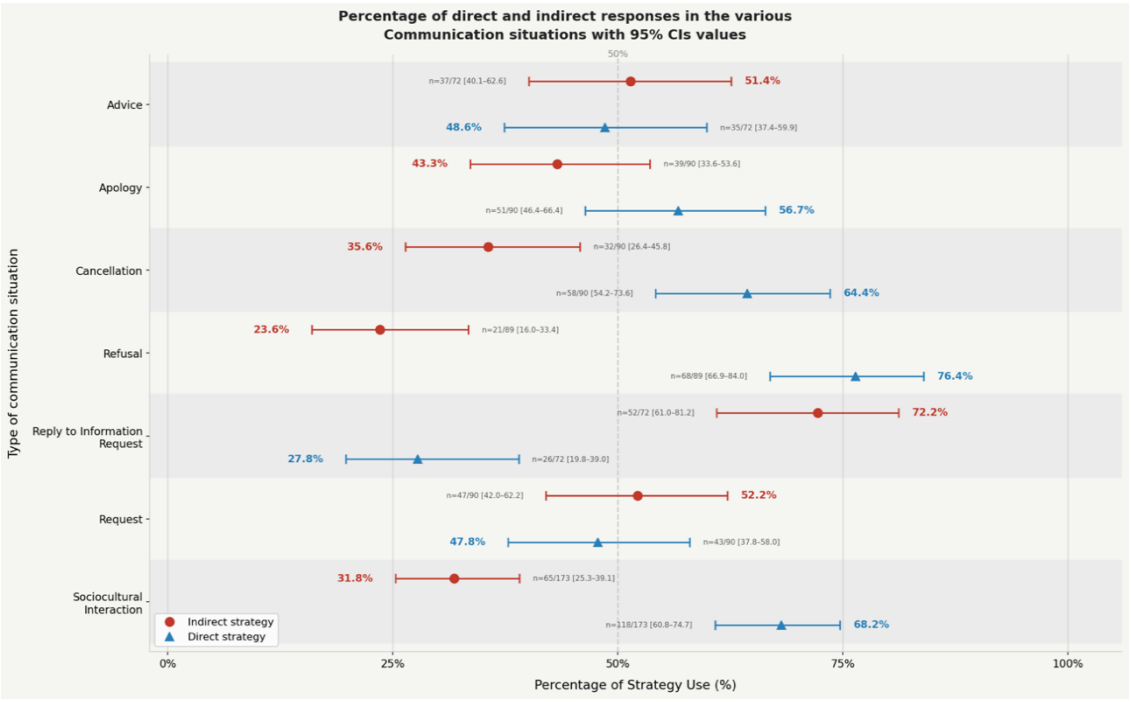
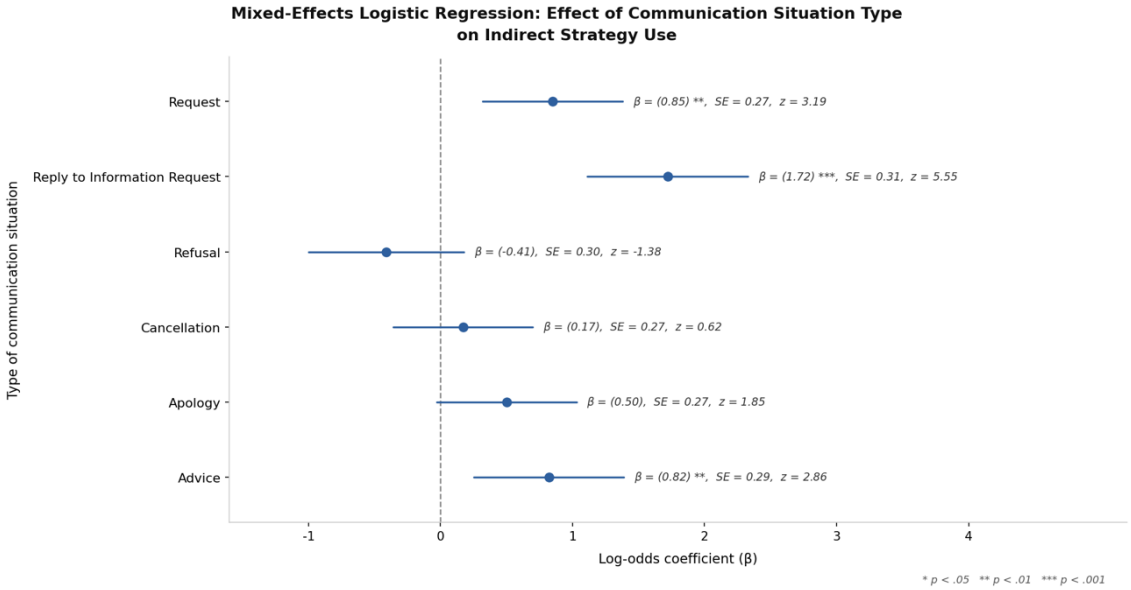


Figure 3 shows the results of a mixed-effects model, which was run to predict the statistical significance of indirect style across the 6 communicative situations in relation to the baseline condition (*Sociocultural interaction*). The model was fitted with the type of communicative situation and communication style as fixed effects and participants as random effects. Fixed-effect coefficients indicate the change in the log-odds of indirect style relative to the baseline condition. P-value was calculated using Wald z. In relation to *Sociocultural interaction*, indirect styles were more likely to be used in *Advice*, β = 0.82, SE = 0.29, z = 2.86, p = .004, *Reply to information request*, β = 1.72, SE = 0.31, z = 5.55, p < .001, and in *Request*, β = 0.85, SE = 0.27, z = 3.19, p = .001. The use of indirect style was not significant in *Apology*, p = .065, *Cancellation*, p = .538 and *Refusal*, p = .168.

Figure 3. Results of a mixed effects model to predict the statistical significance of indirect styles in the 6 communicative situations in relation to the baseline condition (*Sociocultural interaction*).



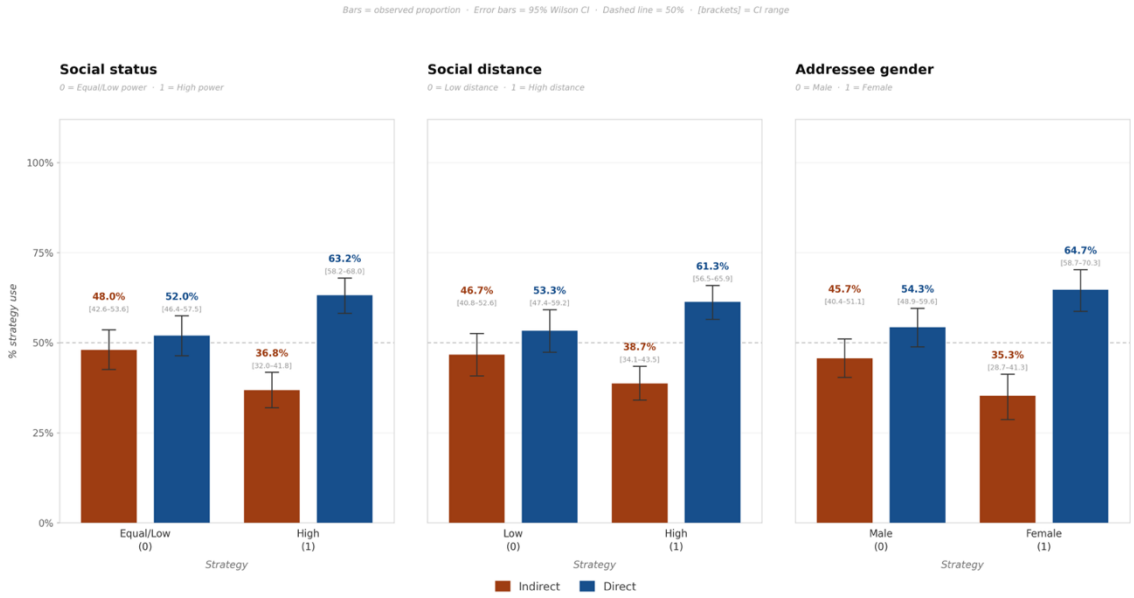
2.3 The effect of contextual factors (social status, social distance and gender) on communication style

As shown in Figure 4, when interacting with interlocutors of equal or lower social status, participants employ both direct and indirect strategies, as indicated by the overlap in confidence intervals (CIs). Specifically, the use of direct Strategies was 52.0% (95% CI [46.4, 57.5]), while indirect strategies accounted for 48.0% (95% CI [42.6, 53.6]). But when addressing interlocutors of higher social status, participants showed a greater preference for direct strategies (63.2%, 95% CI [58.2, 68.0]), whereas the use of indirect strategies decreased to 36.8% (95% CI [32.0, 41.8]).

A similar pattern was observed with respect to social distance. When social distance was low, participants used both direct (53.3%, 95% CI [47.4, 59.2]) and indirect strategies (46.7%, 95% CI [40.8, 52.6]). However, with interlocutors with a high social distance, participants used direct strategies more frequently (61.3%, 95% CI [56.5, 65.9]), while the use of indirect strategies was lower.

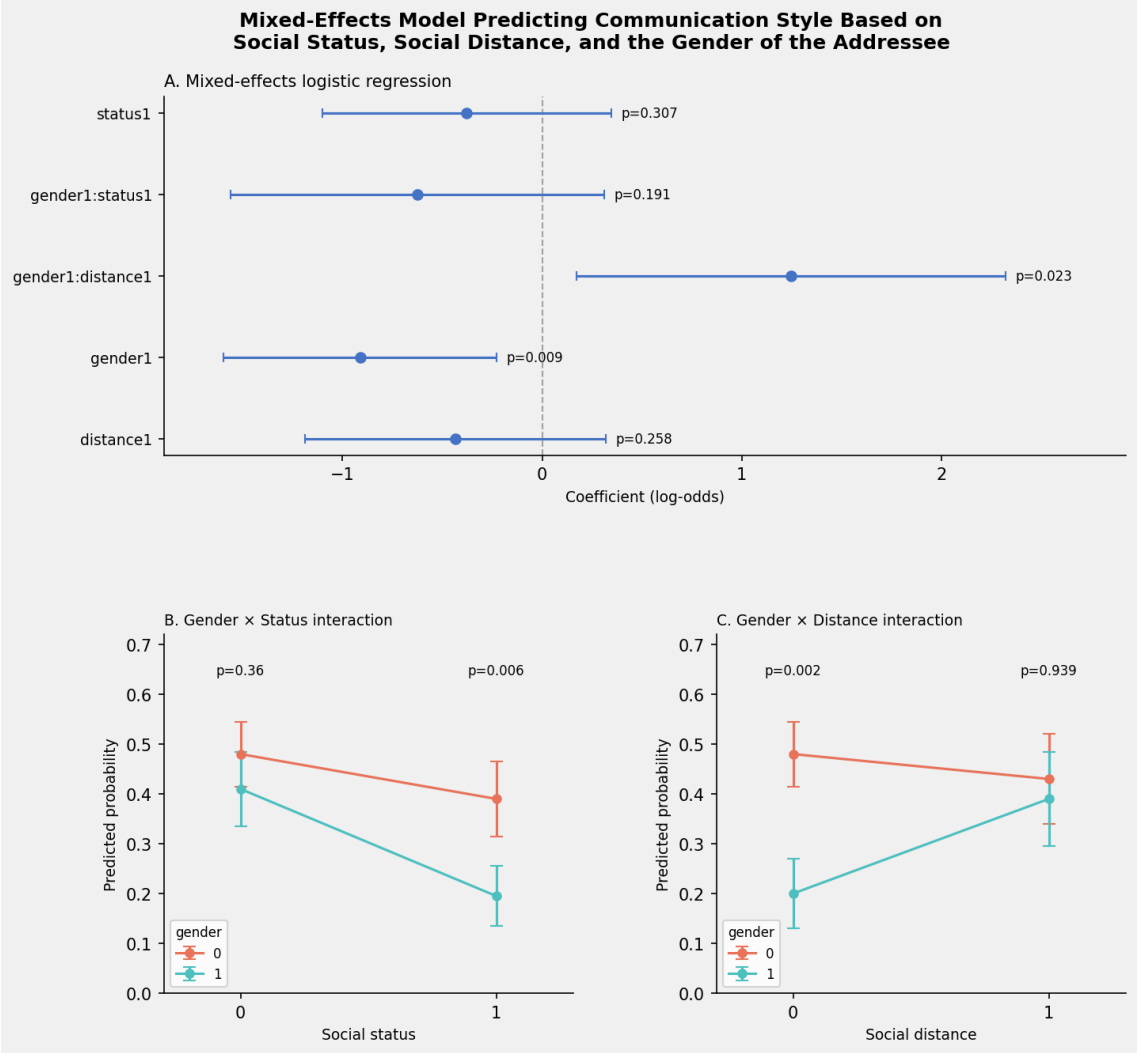
As for the gender of the addressee, participants used both direct (54.3%, 95% CI [48.9, 59.6]) and indirect Strategies (45.7%, 95% CI [40.4, 51.1]) with male interlocutors, as indicated by overlapping CIs. But when addressing female interlocutors, participants showed a stronger preference for direct strategies (64.7%, 95% CI [58.7, 70.3]), with indirect strategies used less frequently (35.3%, 95% CI [28.7, 41.3]).

Figure 4. Relation between sociocultural variables (social status, social distance and gender of the addressee) on communication style



A mixed-effects logistic regression model was run to test the effects of social status, social distance and addressee's gender on the use of indirect communication style; participant was included as a random intercept. As shown in Figure 5, the main effects of social status and social distance were not statistically significant. Main effect was statistically significant (β = -0.92, p = .009), indicating that, overall, participants were less likely to use indirect communication when addressing a female interlocutor. The interaction between gender and social status was not statistically significant (p = .191). The predicted probability of receiving an indirect response was higher with male gender, regardless of social status; moreover, a significant gender difference was observed at high social status (p=0.006), but not with an interlocutor with low social status (p = 0.36). Moreover, Panel C shows that the interaction between social distance and gender of the addressee was statistically significant (β = 1.12, p = 0.023), which indicates that the effect of the gender of the addressee on the predicted probability of indirectness depends on the social distance with the interlocutor (i.e., familiarity). The gap between the two genders in terms of the predicted probability of indirectness was statistically significant in the low social distance condition (p = 0.002), indicating that when addressing an interlocutor with low social distance, the male addressee received a higher predicted probability of an indirect response than the female addressee, but this gap was not found at the high social distance level (p = 0.939), as both genders received similar predicted probability of indirectness.

Figure 5. Mixed model effects for the interaction between sociocultural variables (social status, social distance and gender of the addressee) and communication style



8. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of the preliminary interview shows that, as expected, participants are sensitive to differences in the social and cultural norms of their own country with respect to those of the host country, i.e. Italy. Particularly, they report differences in communication style, social norms, as well as nonverbal aspects such as food and clothing style. A main cause of concern is related to language use and communication as the participants report difficulties in communicating and socializing in the host country. Specifically, the participants' low proficiency in Italian makes them unable to communicate with Italians, and this makes them feel marginalized and unable to integrate in the Italian society.

The data from the questionnaire show that the participants make use of both direct and indirect communication strategies. The most frequent direct strategy was *Explicit communication of intention* used in the expressions of *advice, cancellation, refusal, request, reply to information request, and sociocultural interaction.* The second most frequent direct strategy was *inability/unwillingness to reject an offer or a request for pragmatic and cultural reasons* used in *cancellation, refusal, and request*. On the other hand, the participants used indirect communication strategies such as *indirect advice* in the expression of *advice*; *vague or imprecise information* in the expression of *advice, apology, cancellation, refusal, request and sociocultural interaction*; *offering help or alternative* in *reply to information request, apology, and cancellation*; *no action and no notification* in *cancellation, request and sociocultural interaction*; and finally the least frequent indirect Strategy was *verbal agreement followed by nonverbal noncompliance* in *cancellation, refusal, request and sociocultural interaction.* These findings support Anchimbe's (2018) claim that indirectness is not the common strategy for politeness used in postcolonial societies, but it is rather influenced by cultural and social norms and by what is socially expected by the interlocutor. Also, these findings confirm previous research on requests in Cameroonian French and English (Nkemleke, 2008, Mulo Farenkia, 2016; Kouega, 2018, Apuge and Warda, 2021) showing that indirectness is seen as a strategy to soften requests and express deference, thus increasing the chance of being accepted. Thus, communication style tends to be indirect; however, this overall tendency was not observed in all communicative situations, as statistical significance predicting indirectness was not observed in apology, cancellation and refusal, suggesting that the participants' communication style is hybrid (Anchimbe, 2018).

Our findings also show that the participants' communication style is highly influenced by the gender of the addressee, as they tend to use an indirect style when communicating with men but a direct style when communicating with women. This gender effect was found regardless of social hierarchy, as the participants communicated more indirectly and more frequently with men than with women when both genders had the same social status. This supports previous work on cultural values in sub-Saharan African societies, showing that females are considered weak and cannot participate in social decisions, which are reserved for males, who are recognized to be the source of social power and leadership, reflecting the patriarchal nature of these societies (Gardiner, 1998, Yaw Oppong, 2013, Awoniyi 2015).

Social distance in relation to gender also has an impact on communication style. Thus, when the participants communicate with familiar people, they use an indirect style with men more frequently than with women, but no difference between the two genders was observed in communications involving high social distance interlocutors.

The use of a direct style when addressing women confirms the relevance of conforming to social expectations about gender in communication (Anchimbe, 2018). The differences in communication style also reflect the collective value of 'Ubuntu' whereby the extended family context and group relations are seen as a source of support, sharing, belonging and reliance (Schwartz, 2006, Yaw Oppong, 2013). Thus, the nature of the verbal message is influenced by social relations, and social status, feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity with the interlocutor and gender of the interlocutors. Direct communication is used for people perceived as 'in-group members', while indirect communication is used with 'out-group members. Indirect communication is also associated with deference and respect, and so more often used with men then with women, since the former are typically given more power and authority in the culture.

The awareness of the existence of social dynamics regulating verbal communication in Nigerian and Cameroonian interactions may be key to a better inclusion and integration of the migrants in the Italian society. Since communication and social relations are so intertwined, establishing good interpersonal relationships may be of foremost importance to develop good communication, and vice versa.

Our design used a non-speech-act scenario, 'sociocultural interaction,' to mitigate the absence of a control group. Future research might include a control group to quantify more precisely the difference with the host Italian society. Future research might also focus on creating effective educational and social programs to teach migrants pragmatics, as well as sociocultural norms to support their inclusion and reduce their feeling of being discriminated.

Reference

ANCHIMBE E. A., Offers and offer refusals: A postcolonial pragmatics perspective on World Englishes, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018

APUGE M. E., WARDA F., The speech acts of requests in Cameroon Francophone English, International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research, 9(4), 2021

AVODO AVODO J., Speech act of claiming among Cameroonian and Chadian French speakers, Studies in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis, 5(2), 2024

AWONIYI S., African Cultural Values: The Past, Present and Future, Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 17(1), 2015

BIANCO R., ORTIZ COBO M., The Linguistic Integration of Refugees in Italy, Social Sciences, 8(10), 2019

EXTRAMIANA C., VAN AVERMAET P., Language requirements for adult migrants in Council of Europe member states: Report on a survey, Council of Europe, 2011

FERNÁNDEZ VÍTORES D., El papel de la lengua en la configuración de la migración europea: Tendencias y desencuentros, Lengua y Migración / Language and Migration, 5(2), 2013

GARDINER K., Managing in different cultures: The case of Ghana, in Towers B., Handbook of human resource management, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996

GHIO D., BRATTI M., BIGNAMI S., Linguistic Barriers to Immigrants' Labor Market Integration in Italy, International Migration Review, 57(1), 2023

GUT U., UNUABONAH F., Requesting Strategies in Nigerian and British English: A corpus-based approach, in EKPENYONG M. E., UDOH I. I., Current issues in descriptive linguistics and digital humanities, Springer, 2022

GUT U., UNUABONAH F., DANIEL F., GERFER A., OLADIPUPO R., OYEBOLA F., Offers in Nigerian English, in Lingua, vol. 303, 2024.

GYEKYE K., African cultural values: An introduction, Sankofa Publishing Company, 2002

HALL E. T., Beyond culture, Anchor Books, 1976

HOFSTEDE G. (1980). Culture and Organizations. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, *10*(4), 15–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.1980.11656300

KOUEGA J.-P., Request realisations in Cameroon Pidgin English, Journal of Linguistics and Education Research, 1(1), 2018

MULO FARENKIA B., La textualisation de la politesse dans les lettres de requête en milieu universitaire camerounais, in MULO FARENKIA B., Im/politesse et rituels interactionnels en contextes plurilingues et multiculturels, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2016

NKEMLEKE D., Please-requests in Cameroonian and Kenyan private (social) letters, Discourse and Interaction, 1(2), 2008

NKWAIN J., Complimenting and face: A pragma-stylistic analysis of appraisal speech acts in Cameroon Pidgin English, Acta Linguistica Hafniensia, 43(1), 2011

OGIERMANN E., Discourse completion tasks, in JUCKER A., SCHNEIDER K., BUBLITZ W., Methods in Pragmatics, Mouton de Gruyter, 2018

OPPONG N. Y., Towards African work orientations: Guide from Hofstede's cultural dimensions, European Journal of Business and Management, 5(20), 2013

PASQUARELLA A., JIA F., FERREIRA A., SCHWIETER J. W., Editorial: Culture and second language (L2) learning in migrants, volume II, Frontiers in Psychology, 16, 2025

RAZAK G. M., HENDRY C., STEVENSON M., I am because we are: The role of Sub-Saharan Africa's collectivist culture in achieving traceability and global supply chain resilience, Journal of Supply Chain Management, 2024

ROEVER C., Validation of a web-based test of ESL pragmalinguistics, Language Testing, 23(2), 2006

SCHWARTZ S., A Theory of Cultural Value Orientations: Explication and Applications, Comparative Sociology, 5(2-3), 2006

TAGUCHI N., Comprehending Implied Meaning in English as a Foreign Language, The Modern Language Journal, 89(4), 2005

WALLIS S., Binomial Confidence Intervals and Contingency Tests: Mathematical Fundamentals and the Evaluation of Alternative Methods, Journal of Quantitative Linguistics, 20(3), 2013

WOLDU H. G., Looking at African value system through cultural dimensions: How do African countries culturally differ among themselves and from the United States? in International Conference on African Development Archives (Paper n. 30), Western Michigan University, 2001

ZANNONI F., Intercultural mediation addressed to refugees and asylum seekers in Italy, Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences, 13(2), 2020

Appendix 1

a. The interview

1. What is your country of origin? And where were you born?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your level of education?
4. When did you arrive in Italy?
5. What did you work in your country of origin and what do you work in Italy?
6. Which are the cultural and Communicative differences you observed between Italy and your country and your country of origin?

b. The questionnaire

1. Your friend forgot their bike and asks to borrow yours, but you don't want to lend it. What could be your response in this situation?
    a. I say NO because I don't want to give him the bike.
    b. I say YES, but then I don't give him the bike.
    c. I tell him to go get the bike from somewhere, but it's not there.
    d. I make up some excuse to avoid giving him the bike.
    e. I feel sorry to give him the bike, but I give it anyway.
2. Your friend invites you to dinner, but you don't want to go because you have plans to go out with your wife. What could be your response in this situation?
    a. I say NO because I must go out with my wife.
    b. I say YES but then call and cancel.
    c. I accept the invitation but then don't show up.
    d. I make up some excuse to avoid going to dinner.
    e. I feel sorry to accept the invitation, but I go anyway.
3. A social worker asks you to come back the next day to bring additional documents, but you can't go because you are working. How would you behave in this situation?

a. I tell them I can't because I'm working.

b. I say YES but then don't come back the next day.

c. I say YES but then call the next day and explain that an unforeseen event happened.

d. I feel sorry to come back tomorrow, but because the documents are important, I go tomorrow.

e. I say nothing and don't go back tomorrow.

4. At the hospital, the doctor suggests that you stay for additional tests, but you want to go home. How would you behave in this situation?

a. I say I can't because I'm working.

b. I say YES, stay a little, and then leave without telling anyone.

c. I make up a reason to leave.

d. I leave without saying anything.

e. Since the tests are necessary, I stay in the hospital.

5. The CPIA director asks you to participate in a cultural exchange event, but you don't feel like going. What could be your response in this situation?

a. I say NO because I don't feel like it.

b. I say YES, but then don't go, without informing anyone.

c. I say YES but then call to cancel.

d. I make up some excuse to avoid going.

e. I feel sorry to participate, but I go anyway.

6. You accepted your colleague's request to take her Friday/Sunday afternoon shift, but you must cancel because it is Ramadan and you need to go to the mosque/you must cancel because you must go to the mess with your family. What could be your reaction to cancel in a situation like this?

a. I don't show up without warning

b. I don't show up, then I call and explain that I wasn't able to go

c. I tell her that I must go to the mosque to pray and therefore I can't go/ I tell her that I must cancel because I must go to the church with your family

d. I make up an excuse to cancel

e. I don't cancel, so I go despite Ramadan/my family's request

7. The cultural mediator scheduled an appointment for you at the police station tomorrow, but you need to cancel because you want to go to work. How would you react in this situation?
    a. I don't show up without informing anyone.
    b. I don't go and don't inform anyone but call later to justify myself.
    c. I inform them in advance, saying I won't attend tomorrow because I must go to work.
    d. I make up an excuse not to go.
    e. I don't cancel and go anyway because the appointment is important.
8. You told your friend that you would accompany them to get the health card, but your wife asked you to go shopping with her. How would you cancel this commitment?
    a. I don't show up without informing anyone.
    b. I don't go and don't inform anyone but call later to justify myself.
    c. I inform them in advance, saying I won't go tomorrow because I must work.
    d. I don't accept the invitation and don't go.
    e. I don't cancel and go anyway.
9. A month ago, you confirmed a hospital appointment for a vaccine, but now you don't want to go. How would you cancel this commitment?
    a. I call and tell the doctor that I don't feel like getting the vaccine.
    b. I don't show up and then call to justify my absence.
    c. I don't show up and don't say anything.
    d. I call to ask to reschedule the appointment to a later date.
    e. I go to the appointment because the vaccine is important.
10. You are invited to your friend's wedding and have confirmed your attendance, but for family reasons, you can't be there. How would you cancel this commitment?
    a. I don't go without explaining anything to anyone.
    b. I don't inform anyone and don't go, then later try to explain.
    c. I call to say that I can't go due to health reasons.
    d. I feel sorry to go, but I go anyway.

e. I go only to say hello and then leave quickly.

11. The doctor told you to fast before the tests, but you drank and compromised the results. What could be your response in this situation?

    a. I apologize and admit that I made a mistake.

    b. I apologize, give some justification, and promise not to repeat this behavior.

    c. I tell the doctor that I didn't know I had to fast.

    d. I don't show up for the appointment.

    e. I pretend I didn't drink anything and don't tell the doctor that I did.

11. On the bus, you didn't validate your ticket, but the inspector told you that you had to. What could be your response in this situation?

    a. To avoid a fine, I apologize, admit I was wrong, and try to be polite.

    b. I apologize and give justifications for not having paid for the ticket.

    c. I deny responsibility (say the validator wasn't working) and don't apologize.

    d. I get angry and say I don't want to pay the fine.

    e. I try to talk or ask the inspector about other things so that I don't admit I was wrong and avoid the fine.

12. At work, you were supposed to arrive at 8 to do the shift handover with your colleague, but you arrived at 9 and made them wait for an hour. What could be your response in this situation?

    a. I apologize and admit I was wrong, but I don't justify myself.

    b. I apologize and tell them that I will make up an extra hour for their next shift.

    c. I don't admit I was wrong, minimize the situation, and try to remind them of a similar situation on their part.

    d. I make up some excuse, like traffic or something else, to avoid looking bad.

    e. I try to change the subject to avoid giving explanations or admitting I was wrong.

13. At CPIA/Italian course, you forgot the book needed to attend, and the teacher got annoyed by this behavior. What would be your reaction in this situation?

    a. I apologize and admit I was wrong.

b. I apologize and promise I won't repeat this in the future.

c. I ignore the situation and pretend nothing happened.

d. I don't apologize and make up a serious reason.

e. I don't apologize and make a joke to change the subject.

14. You didn't attend your friend's father's funeral because you had a work commitment. What would be your reaction in this situation?

a. I apologize and try to justify my absence.

b. I apologize and bring a gift.

c. I don't apologize and ignore it, hoping my friend forgets.

d. I ignore the situation, but when I meet them, I say that I was in poor health during those days.

e. I ask a friend to talk to them, and then I meet them.

15. You need to ask your employer for a day off because your friend is coming to visit, but many colleagues are absent. How would you behave in this situation?

a. I don't ask and don't go to work.

b. I say I need a day off because I must go to the doctor.

c. I ask for a day off to see my friend.

d. I ask, but if they say NO, I don't go to work and make up some excuse.

e. I go to work even though I feel sorry.

16. You need to renew your health card, but at the office, the clerk told you that all appointments are next month, and you want to do it now instead of waiting. What could be your response in this situation?

a. I say I need an appointment immediately and cannot wait.

b. I say it's fine but then go back later to speak with their manager or try to get an appointment elsewhere.

c. I feel sorry to wait until next month, and I wait for my appointment.

d. I don't accept and get angry with the clerk.

e. I accept and leave without saying anything.

17. You are at the hairdresser; you booked only a haircut, but you also want to get a shave because you want to do everything at once. What could be your response in this situation?

a. I make up excuses to say that I need to shave today.

b. I ask to also get a shave. If they say NO, I accept a new appointment but then look for another hairdresser.

c. I feel sorry to book an appointment on another day, but I do it.

d. I get angry and leave without saying anything.

e. I pretend that I had booked both the haircut and the shave, and maybe they won't notice and do both for me.

18. At the municipal office, you are registering at the civil registry, but you realize that you forgot your passport at home. How would you react in this situation?

a. I inform the officer that I forgot my passport and ask for another appointment.

b. I tell the officer that I forgot my passport but have a photocopy and another ID and ask someone to bring me the passport.

c. I don't say anything and go home quickly to get the passport.

d. I insist and say that it's urgent, hoping they will do it anyway.

e. I tell the officer that a family member is bringing the physical passport, but no one is coming.

19. In a restaurant, you want to change the dish you ordered because you don't like it. What could be your response in a situation like this?

a. I say that I don't like it and ask to change the dish

b. I say that the dish is very good, but I can't eat it for health reasons

c. I say that the dish is very good, but I misread the menu and wanted to order something else

d. I don't ask to change the dish

e. I ask to change the dish but if they say NO, I say that I won't pay for it

20. On the street, an elegant woman asks you where the post office is, but you don't know. How would you react in this situation?

a. I tell her that I don't know.

b. I try to check on my phone where the post office is and then tell her.

c. I give inaccurate information and send her in another direction.

d. To be polite, I try to find the way with her.

e. I pretend I didn't hear and walk away.

21. Your new colleague asks you how to register vacation days in the work system, but you have never done it. How would you react in this situation?

    a. I tell them that I have never done it.

    b. I try to access the system, make sure how it works, and then explain it to them.

    c. I give them information that might be incorrect.

    d. I tell them that I don't know and suggest doing it together or asking another colleague.

    e. I tell them we'll do it later and then leave as soon as I finish work.

22. The doctor asks you how many times a day you have taken the prescribed medication, but you forgot to take it. How would you react in this situation?

    a. I tell them that I didn't take the medication because I forgot.

    b. I tell them that I didn't take the medication because I didn't think it was important.

    c. I don't say anything because I know I was wrong.

    d. I tell them that I took the medication as prescribed.

    e. I give a vague answer to avoid confrontation.

23. You are working in a store, and a customer asks you the price of a product, but you don't know it. How would you react in this situation?

    a. I tell them that I don't know.

    b. I tell them that I don't know and suggest they ask at the checkout.

    c. I give an approximate price because I roughly know how much the product costs.

    d. I give a wrong answer without checking or asking anyone.

    e. I check and then tell them the correct price.

24. A friend says that they can't learn Italian because it's too difficult, but you know they don't practice much. How would you behave in this situation?

    a. I tell them that they don't practice enough.

    b. I tell them that Italian is difficult.

    c. I say that Italian is difficult, but practice helps a lot.

    d. I don't comment and suggest practicing together.

    e. I don't comment and don't give advice.

25. Your wife has vision problems, didn't follow the doctor's instructions properly, and is still unwell, but she believes the therapy isn't working. How would you react in this situation?

    a. I tell her that she didn't follow the medical instructions.

    b. I tell her that I agree with her.

    c. I make up stories about how the therapy works.

    d. I don't comment and suggest she ask the doctor.

    e. I say nothing about this topic.

26. Your boss has brought a new product to the store. None of the customers bought it because the price is high compared to other stores, but he believes the new product is inexpensive. How would you react in this situation?

    a. I tell him that the product price is high compared to other stores, and we need to lower it.

    b. I tell him that the product and price are very competitive.

    c. I say that there is a lot of market competition, and we need to think about solutions if we want to sell the product.

    d. I insist with the customers to try to sell the product.

    e. I say nothing about it.

27. Your friend was fired from their job because they were always late, but they believe there are other reasons. How would you react in this situation?

    a. I tell them that they were late to work and should have been punctual.

    b. I tell them that I agree with them that there are other reasons.

    c. I make up stories, so they don't feel guilty about losing the job.

    d. I tell them that they were wrongly fired.

    e. I don't comment and don't give advice.

28. On a public transport, you are seated and an elderly woman gets on who does not find a place to sit and remains standing, what would be your reaction in this situation?

    a. I offer her my seat because she is elderly and this is how one behaves like this in my culture

    b. I ignore her because in my culture the man has priority to remain seated

c. I stand up and leave the seat but without saying anything to her

d. I do not offer her anything and remain seated but if she comes to ask, I say yes

e. I do not offer anything and remain seated and if she comes to ask, I say no

29. You are in a bar, and a woman comes very close to you while you speak, much closer than I am used to. What would be your reaction in this situation?

a. I try to move away myself

b. I continue to speak, even if it bothers me.

c. I tell her that I need more distance to be able to feel comfortable

d. I try to say in an implicit way that I am not comfortable

e. I interrupt the conversation and leave without saying anything because one does not behave like this in my culture

30. In a work meeting, your colleague continuously interrupts you while you speak. What would be your reaction in this situation?

a. I stop and let her speak.

b. I politely ask her not to interrupt me and continue to speak

c. I continue to speak and ignore her

d. I get angry and confront her.

e. I complain and tell the situation to our boss

31. your boss has decided to transfer you to work in a department outside the city where you live without asking your opinion or giving you notice and you do not want to be transferred, what would be your reaction in this situation?

a. I tell him that I do not agree and he should have consulted me first

b. I accept because it is the decision of my boss and I must do what he wants

c. I accept initially because it is the boss's decision and then I try to return to the city

d. I do not accept but I speak with the administration

e. I accept but I make absences at work and justify with the fact that I live far away so they make me return to the city

32. Your colleagues from work have invited you to dinner at 20:00, and you have confirmed your presence, what would be your reaction?
    a. I arrive at the restaurant at 20:00 or even earlier
    b. I try to arrive on time but if I arrive a bit late, I am comfortably at ease, it is not a problem
    c. I arrive late and if they ask me the reason, I justify myself
    d. maybe I do not show up because it is not important
    e. I call the colleagues to say that I have commitments, and I arrive comfortably at ease
33. your company asks you for many years of work to receive a permanent contract, what would be your reaction in this situation?
    a. I decide that I will commit myself for some years to obtain the permanent position because this is how it is done in Italy
    b. I accept but I look for another place that gives me a permanent job
    c. I do not accept, and I look for another activity that gives me results in the short term
    d. I refuse and I ask for a permanent contract immediately
    e. I am not happy, but I accept
34. your colleague at work offers you a coffee, but you have not known each other for a long time, what would be your reaction in this situation?
    a. I accept and thank because this is how one behaves in my culture
    b. I accept but then next time I offer
    c. I do not accept, and I ask that we pay separately
    d. I do not accept, and I do not take the coffee
    e. I accept but then now of payment, I pay
35. your boss criticizes you in front of colleagues because you arrived late, but you arrived late because of traffic, what would be your reaction in this situation?
    a. I explain the reason, so I do not seem to be wrong
    b. I remain calm; I listen to the criticism and then I leave the work and go home
    c. I listen to the criticism and then I speak to him in private
    d. I get angry and respond to the boss in front of colleagues.

e. I ignore the criticism and continue to work as if nothing had happened.

36. your child's teacher has asked you to bring your child to participate in a socialization activity on the weekend, what would be your reaction in this situation?

    a. I accept and accompany my child because the activity is important

    b. I refuse without giving explanations

    c. I confirm and then we do not show up to the event without informing

    d. I invent an excuse to not go

    e. I say yes and then I call on the same day to cancel and justify our absence

37. at work, colleagues call the boss by name without title. What could be your reaction? (additional question for Nigerians)

    a. I also call him by name without title because this is how one behaves in Italy

    b. I call him with the title because this is how one behaves in my culture

    c. when I speak to him, I avoid calling him neither by name nor by title

    d. I feel sorry to call him by name, but I do it, so I do not seem strange

    e. I explain to him that I must call him by title and I do it.

© 2026 dall'Autore/i; licenziatario Humanities, Messina, Italia.
Questo è un articolo ad accesso aperto, distribuito con licenza Creative Commons
Attribuzione - Non commerciale - Non opere derivate 3.0
Humanities, Anno XVI (2026), numero 1
DOI: 10.13129/2240-7715/2026.1. 71 - 110