

ABSTRACT

A Survey of Chinese Politeness from Imperial to Modern Times: Kinship Terminologies and Honorifics

Anna Ye

Director: Ms. Holly Shi, M.A.

This thesis is founded on the understanding that culture and language are mutually influenced by one another. Having a grasp on a culture's linguistic politeness strategies allows seamless navigation within a culture; it is a mark of fluency in a language. This thesis examines the intimate relationships between Confucian teaching, major events within Chinese history, and Chinese politeness. Specifically, it follows the evolution in usage of kinship terminologies and honorifics from imperial to contemporary times in spoken Chinese. The effects of major ideological and political transitions such as the May Fourth Movement, Communist Revolution, and Cultural Revolution on Chinese politeness are discussed. While the usages of kinship terminologies and honorifics have risen and fallen from imperial to contemporary times, they are still an active part of contemporary Chinese politeness. To illustrate different methods of usage in politeness strategies, examples of dialogues from popular Chinese movies and television shows are presented and analyzed.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS:

Holly Shi

Ms. Holly Shi, Department of Modern Languages and Cultures

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM:

Dr. Andrew Wisely, Director

DATE: _____

A SURVEY OF CHINESE POLITENESS FROM IMPERIAL TO MODERN
TIMES:

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGIES AND HONORIFICS

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Baylor University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Honors Program

By

Anna Ye

Waco, Texas

May 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Confucius and Politeness Strategy.....	3
Chapter Two: Kinship Terminologies.....	21
Chapter Three: Honorifics.....	45
Conclusion.....	65
Bibliography.....	68

PREFACE

Growing up as an Asian American, I consistently found myself searching for the culture in which I fit. Among my extended family and the native Chinese speakers of my parents' community, I did not feel Chinese enough. "Here comes the American", my now-Canadian uncle from Beijing would comment as I approached him at family reunions. On the other hand, the lack of feeling *Chinese enough* sometimes morphed into a fear of being *too Chinese* in front of my Caucasian American classmates. In my least confident moments, I found myself suppressing my "Chinese-ness" in front of my friends in order to feel accepted, even though they never expected that of me. I was proud when they made comments like "Anna, you're not even that Chinese!" That felt like validation to me, but it shouldn't have.

After years of asking the question, "Am I Chinese, or am I American?" as if they were two mutually exclusive entities, I finally learned that I had been asking the wrong question entirely. Upon experiencing the growth that comes with college education and experience, I realized that the answer is that I do not belong to just one culture. I belong to both. So, I shifted my question from "Which culture do I belong to" to "How can I successfully participate in both cultures?" In other words, I gave up my search for the perfect suit of camouflage and turned to the goal of becoming a chameleon.

To answer my newly found question, I participated in both communities; I became a translator in the Chinese Church while simultaneously attending an English-speaking church. I continued enrolling in Chinese courses, hoping to find more answers. I

noticed that certain conventions used within Chinese conversations have no equivalent in English. Those especially interested me. To piece it together, I tried to identify aspects of myself that made me feel more American or Chinese. In conversations, I practiced portraying myself as more Chinese or American. I knew the “x-factor” to sounding more Chinese or American was not the ability to speak the language, since I could speak both fluently and without an accent. I realized it lies somewhere else.

While I did not know it at the time, what I was learning was how to successfully negotiate my identity in conversations with others. This is a concept at the heart of sociolinguistics and is a skill that all people practice in their communications with others. After I realized that difference in politeness strategy is one of the main factors that carries so much cultural weight in conversations, I knew I had to learn more about Chinese politeness. Therefore, it was in my journey towards better understanding myself and where I fit in my community that I gained interest in the topic of this thesis. I have learned so much about myself in this process, and I hope that my thesis will spark similar interests in my readers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Shi Laoshi for skillfully guiding me through this journey with patience, grace, and understanding. Thank you for giving me ideas when I felt stuck and for all your words of encouragement. Thank you for caring not only about my project but also about me as a person. I really would not have wanted to complete this project with anyone else.

I would also like to thank my family, especially my mom, for being the greatest cheerleader in my life and for showing me how to balance constructive self-criticism with self-love. Thank you for listening to me talk—sometimes excitedly and sometimes complainingly—about this thesis for hours and hours, even when it was boring to you.

INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon to hear that learning a country's language is a necessary step to truly understanding that country's culture and vice versa, which explains the integration of cultural education into language pedagogy. This idea is supported by Whorf's theory of linguistic determinism, which asserts that "the structure of a language determines or limits the world view of its speakers" (Swann). Although Whorf's view is generally regarded by modern scholars as an overstatement, that culture and language influence one another cannot be denied. Cultural norms provide the guidelines for social interaction. They inform people of their place in the world and teach them how to conduct themselves appropriately. In the linguistic dimension, the use of politeness strategies allows for fluency and harmony in communication. In this thesis, I will show how Chinese politeness strategies are inseparable from Confucian thought and must be studied within their respective historical contexts. Specifically, I will investigate how the usages of honorifics and kinship terminologies within Chinese politeness have evolved from imperial to contemporary times. I will provide excerpts from spoken dialogues gathered from prominent Chinese television shows and movies to illustrate and analyze the politeness strategies.

In the first chapter, I will provide a brief background of Confucius and the time period he lived in. I will then explore two concepts within Confucian teaching that have had the strongest influence on Chinese politeness, the role of the family and the rites.

Lastly, I will introduce Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and provide examples of positive and negative politeness from popular Chinese television shows and movies.

In the second chapter, I will follow the evolution of the family unit during and after the major political and ideological transition of the Communist Revolution. I will explore how the usage of kinship terminologies originated and how it is used in the politeness context. Specifically, I will focus on the strategy of addressing non-kin as kin as it is used before and after the communist takeover in China.

In the third chapter, I will define and provide examples of honorific terminologies and demonstrate how they are used within Chinese politeness strategies. I will illustrate which aspects of honorifics have changed or remained the same from the imperial to contemporary periods. Specifically, I will describe how the May 4th Movement and Cultural Revolution greatly impacted the evolution in honorific usage and provide examples of conventional and unconventional applications of honorifics in modern speech. I will show that while honorific usage has suffered an overall decline in conventional speech, it is still indispensable to Chinese politeness and remains a mark of fluency in Chinese.

Although the gulf between imperial and contemporary Chinese politeness seems vast at the surface-level, the essence of Chinese politeness has remained the same. The usages of kinship terminologies and honorifics have stood the test of time and will likely remain firmly embedded within Chinese politeness.

CHAPTER ONE

Confucius and Politeness Strategy

In order to have a holistic understanding of politeness forms within the Chinese language, it is necessary to first pay homage to those who placed the cornerstones of Chinese thought. Among all the Chinese thinkers, “no one in China has enjoyed such respect and wielded such influence as Confucius” (Gung-Hsing 13). As much as the Chinese culture is fluid—constantly evolving and gaining new features—certain aspects of Confucius’s teachings have stood the test of time. His teachings remain firmly embedded within the bedrock of Chinese thought. His lasting influence even through great political changes can be attributed to his somewhat prophetic worldviews. As Creel says, Confucius was “a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way” (Creel 288). What he was preparing for could only be seen in hindsight. Through his teachings, he established a standard of the good life. He painted the picture of the benevolent man and laid out the expectations for how that man is to interact with every level of civilization, starting with the family. It is not without good reason, therefore, that Confucius is often regarded as 无冕之王 *wu mian zhi wang* (the uncrowned king of China) (Brown 9).

Confucius’s Background

Numerous legends, all of which are heavy with prophecies of his future influence, surround the birth of Confucius. Born in 551 B.C. into a family of daughters, Confucius, the son of Shu-Liang Heh and Chang-tsai, shouldered much familial responsibility of

honoring the family name (Brown 35). Not much is known about Confucius's early life other than his own account of his love for learning despite his family's low socioeconomic status: "When I was young my condition was low, and therefore I acquired my ability in many things; but they were mean matters" (Brown 37). As a young man, Confucius held several different jobs, all while pursuing lifelong learning. It was his wisdom as a teacher that drew the public eye to him, but it was not until 500 B.C that he finally held public office, most notably as the Minister of Crime (Brown 59). Although his political office came to a close within three years, his wisdom and virtuous judgment while in office gained the respect of the Chinese people. Until his death on April 11, 479 B.C., Confucius had faithful disciples who stayed by his side and recorded every lesson to be learned from him.

Confucius was born into a time of division and shiftiness. In the two centuries leading to his birth in 551 B.C., the states near the center of Chinese civilization along the Yellow River became the cultural center of China and produced the country's thinkers and peace-keepers; among these states is Lu, where Confucius was born (Creel 15). While these states were rich in Chinese intellect and philosophy, they were also smaller in size and less powerful in military strength when compared to the peripheral states (Creel 15). As internal and external conflicts continued to provoke constant battles, stability was sought through the establishment of solemn and highly religious covenants between states (Creel 16). Instead of permanently alleviating the ensuing conflicts, the covenants—often soon broken—only contributed to increasing skepticism in justice and religion. The people saw how the lust for power often resulted in the acquisition of power, whereas leading a moral life did not yield any practical fruit. As Creel says,

“Might seemed everywhere to be right”, and the aggressive people prevailed, regardless of their immoral character, while the peace-keepers had to submit (Creel 17). In the face of war, vice dominated virtue. Against the backdrop of constant bloodshed where Chinese killed Chinese, “human life was cheap” and the concept of universal law was lost (Creel 20).

The growing power of the states came at the cost of allegiance to the emperor. The king had been “reduced to a puppet” by the more powerful feudal states, and the Chinese people began to see the fragility of the throne (Creel 18). The result was a breakdown of respect for authority. Instead of viewing the emperor as divinely assigned, people began viewing the throne as a position to be stolen. Usurpation was therefore common during this time (Creel 18). As authority became centralized within a few ruling families in the time of Confucius’s *Analects*, the lust for power overtook the love of family. As the Chinese people watched those in authority consistently choose personal gain at the expense of their family, the love of family—like religion—began to lose its place of priority in their hearts and minds: “Even relatives could not trust each other” (Creel 21). As her major stabilizing institutions such as religion and family were breaking down, China needed a leader to tame the chaos. Confucius introduced order back to his country.

Family and Filial Piety

One of the most noticeable values that Confucius reestablishes within China is the reverence for the family unit within Chinese society. In his introduction to the *Analects*, D.C. Lau describes this well when he says that Confucius establishes love and obligation

between family members as “the basis of a general morality” (Confucius 18). The family unit from this perspective is seen as a microcosm of society as a whole. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the country is referred to as “国家” *guo jia* and includes the word “家” *jia*, which means family (Chen 255). Because the family is viewed as the fundamental unit of society, all duty including taking government office, also originates from familial duty. According to Confucius, the familial role one takes in a relationship, especially in a father-son relationship, is the basis for the role a man should take in government: “Hence the first duty of a son is to pay a careful attention to every want of his parents. The next is to serve his government loyally, and the last to establish a good name for himself” (Brown 173). Confucius restores traditional value by placing family and government over personal gain, which was counter-cultural in a time when personal gain seemed to dominate all else. In his own life, Confucius modeled dutifulness to both his family and country. To his family, Confucius was a dutiful son and father. To his country, he was a loyal and honored servant.

Beyond dutifulness, familial relationships are also the source of love and trust of all other relationships; as Lau says in his introduction to the *Analects*, “Love for people outside one’s family is looked upon as an extension of the love for members of one’s own family” (Confucius 18). While popular understanding of Confucius’s filial piety often seeks to reduce it to a works-based practice, the most authentic interpretations understand that it is more. What Confucius sought to recover was not just law and order within the family unit, but the love and respect that was lost. Confucius addresses this nuance when he says:

The filial piety of the present day simply means being able to support one's parents, which extends even to the case of dogs and horses, all of which have something to give in way of support. If there be no reverential feeling in the matter, what is there to distinguish between the cases. (Chin 141)

The reverential feeling that Confucius refers to suggests a sense of love for one's parents that extends beyond the confines of obligation. There is a feeling behind piety that distinguishes it from mindless, heartless action. Confucius demonstrated this when he buried and mourned for his mother. Not only did he observe the three year mourning period that the circumstance called for, but his grief caused him to mark his mother's grave, which was not called for by ancient practice (Chin 182). His reverential feeling, therefore, caused him to act beyond even what tradition called for. Furthermore, he went beyond ceremonial mourning and exhibited personal grief in his inability to play music even after the mourning period. This has been interpreted by scholars as meaning that "he was still tugged toward the direction of the dead"; mourning was clearly not an unnatural task for him, but it was a true expression of his soul (Chin 182).

Li: Ritual Propriety

The tension between performance and reverential feeling is perhaps the strongest in the Confucian concept and practice of 礼 *li*—often translated as "the rites" or "ritual propriety". A correct understanding and practice of 礼 is a central pillar in the Confucian ideal of the good life and is fundamental to Chinese politeness. At first glance, the observance of 礼 can be easily written off as a list of rules one must follow, outlining everything from diet to religious sacrificial rituals. That is only a partially correct

understanding. In a time of political and social chaos, 礼 did serve as a “unified code of conduct” that was necessary to reintroduce harmony within the society (Cline 245). This code of conduct mediated the relationships among men and between man and God. According to Confucius’s disciple Yu Tzu, “Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable” and “to aim always at harmony without regulating it by the rites simply because one knows only about harmony will not, in fact, work” (Confucius 61). The harmony 礼 sought to reestablish was both interpersonal and personal. It served as a stepping stone to cultivating personal character and virtue.

In Confucius’s own life, the rites informed decisions as small as what cuts of meat to eat and what he should wear in the morning to decisions of life and death. While Confucius lived an orderly life, he wasn’t a legalist. For example, when it came to wine consumption, Confucius was not concerned with setting a “rigid limit” but instead trusted his own self-control (Confucius 103). He emphasized and demonstrated living a life of good habits, not only adhering to strict rules. What Confucius expected was for his followers to develop virtue, especially that of 仁 *ren*, often translated as benevolence. Benevolence in Confucian philosophy is “the most important moral quality a man can possess” as it is the defining characteristic of the virtuous man, 君子 *jun zi* (Lau 14). While all have the opportunity and free will to pursue benevolence, Confucius observed that not many—or perhaps no one—really has the willpower to devote himself completely to it. After all, no one can acquire or instill benevolence into another; “the practice of benevolence depends on oneself alone, not on others” (Confucius 112). When asked by his disciples to give an example of a benevolent person, Confucius remained silent.

In order to achieve benevolence, one is expected to do two things: overcome the self and observe the rites (Lau 19). Therefore, in observing the rites, one is simultaneously engaging in virtuous behavior by enforcing good habits while also developing character and discernment. In other words, simply performing the rites does not make one a virtuous person, but a virtuous person must perform the rites. This is reflected in Confucius's question, "What can a man do with the rites who is not benevolent?" (Confucius 67). The implication is, of course, nothing; a man who is not benevolent cannot sincerely observe the rites.

Beyond serving as a scaffold for conventional morality, the observance of the rites also both cultivates and requires a deeper reverence. When talking about the rites, Confucius said, "I cannot bear to see the forms of *li* gone through by those who have no reverence in their hearts" (Creel 84). Scholars like Hagen highlight the internal dimensions of *li* that are so often lost within its rule-book interpretation. In his article, Hagen emphasizes the internal dimension of 礼 by translating it to mean "a *sense* of ritual propriety" (Hagen 3). The internal dimension of 礼 includes the sincere spiritual or emotional feelings that not only accompany the actions of the rites but are also fundamental to performing the rites correctly. The rites provided a way to express oneself appropriately and in a constructive manner. When Lin Fang asked Confucius about the rites, the teacher responded, "In rites in general, rather than extravagance, better frugality. In funeral rites, rather than thoroughness, better real grief" (Cline 246). Without true sincerity of feeling, one cannot observe the rites correctly. Without true reverence and cultivated virtue, one cannot know what is appropriate.

Similar to Aristotelian philosophy, Confucius believed that “Supreme indeed is the Mean as a moral virtue” (Confucius 86). The emphasis then is not doing as much as possible but doing what is appropriate. The benevolent person is not whoever performs the rites the most extravagantly. In fact, Confucius says that “with the rites, it is better to err on the side of frugality than on the side of extravagance” (Confucius 67). A mean must be found between extravagance and frugality in all things to live a virtuous life. An understanding of how to operate within the mean allows for balance. An example of perfect balance is seen in the ceremonial adornment of a ruler according to the rites: a ruler should wear a luxurious “cap with twelve pendants of jade beads strung on red and green silk”, but “his jade token should be unadorned and his carriage spare, with only a rush mat on the seat” (Chin 176).

Politeness Overview

While politeness is not specifically mentioned by Confucius, his teachings provided its fundamental ideals. The connection can be seen in the inclusion of the word 礼 into the Chinese word for politeness, 礼貌 *li mao*. The study of linguistic politeness describes the socially acquired knowledge of how to be linguistically appropriate based on social status, audience, and other factors. Similar to the practice of the rites, the use of politeness is a result of conscious decision-making on behalf of the speaker. According to Gu, it is politeness that “expresses and maintains” 礼, which is described as “social hierarchy and order” (Gu 239). Just as benevolent people were expected to observe 礼, a virtuous person is expected to observe 礼貌, as it is a basis on which character is often judged. Furthermore, employing linguistic politeness is not only the socially expected

thing for a decent person to do, but it also reflects “pragmatic competence” and is “critical to true fluency” of a language (Zhan vii). For this reason, the examples of politeness that will be examined in this paper will be of native Chinese speakers.

Perhaps one of the most influential studies on linguistic politeness is the work done by Brown and Levinson in 1987. Central to their model of politeness is the concept of face, defined as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson 61). Face is an identity that must be created and maintained by both the speaker (S) and addressee (H). According to Brown and Levinson, the maintenance of face is a group effort, and most people are willing to cooperate with others due to the “mutual vulnerability of face”; in other words, “everyone’s face depends on everyone else’s being maintained”, so protecting others’ face also protects one’s own (Brown and Levinson 61).

The role of face is still a topic of controversy, however. This is especially seen in its application to Chinese, since the role of face translated as 面子 *mian zi* in Chinese has been historically inflated in the Western view of Chinese culture. In a 2013 article called “How the Chinese Lost Face”, James St. André notes how “to lose face” first entered the English language as a word-for-word translation from Chinese in the late 19th century (St. André 69). Because it entered Western language through the medium of Western writing, it carried with it a culturally biased interpretation. The large culture gap caused early writers like Gutzlaff to find such Chinese politeness practices to be ‘ridiculous’ or ‘excessive’ (St. André 69). The concept of face quickly became associated with the Chinese identity, but instead of viewing it as a component of politeness, Western scholars associated it with being “overly preoccupied by keeping up appearances” (St. André 72).

This interpretation, along with others, were overwhelmingly negative and tended to paint the Chinese as overly theatrical, deceptive, and untruthful (St. André 69). When Goffman first brought “face” into linguistic discussion, he inevitably also brought its implicit meanings with it (Hinze 15). According to Hinze who believes that Chinese politeness is not centered around “face”, the intricacies of the different aspects of face as expressed in the Chinese cannot be, in its fullness, captured through the Western lens (Hinze 18).

Although there have been disagreements about their findings since being published in 1987, Brown and Levinson’s theory is still widely used and accepted—if not in whole then at least as a starting point in looking at politeness. Because of this, the analysis of politeness used in this paper will be based mostly on their politeness theory, which is based on the assumption that all people have the desire to establish and maintain face (Brown and Levinson 61). They suggest a universal politeness model that can be applied to all languages. In this model, they separate politeness strategies into two general categories: positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness is “oriented toward the positive face of H”, the addressee, with positive face being ‘the want of every member that their wants be desirable to at least some others’ (Brown and Levinson 70). Common expressions of positive politeness include complimenting or agreeing with someone. It is generally more direct in its application and often seeks to draw people closer by either claiming close relation or reinforcing shared membership.

二太太：这块苏州真丝，送给你裁件衣裳。

er tai tai: zhe kuai su zhou zhen si, song gei ni cai jian yi shang.

Second wife/concubine: This is silk fabric from Suzhou. I’d like to give it to you to make a garment.

四太太：哟，二姐，要你送我东西这多不好意思，应该我送给你才对。

si tai tai: you, er jie, yao ni song wo dong xi zhe duo bu hao yi si, ying gai wo song gei ni cai dui.

Fourth wife/concubine: Oh, second sister, how could I receive a gift from you? I should be the one giving you a gift.

二太太：这是什么道理啊？我看你特别顺眼，喜欢就想起这绸子来，要是换了三院那个唱戏的，她掏钱我还不给！

er tai tai: zhe shi shen me dao li a? Wo kan ni te bie shun yan, xi huan jiu xiang qi zhe chou zi lai, yao shi huan le san yuan na ge chang xi de, ta tao qian wo hai bu gei!

Second wife/concubine: What kind of reasoning is that? You are just so pleasing to my eyes. Since I like you, I thought about this silk fabric. I wouldn't give it to the opera singer in the third courtyard even if she paid money for it. (*Raise the Red Lantern*)

In the interaction above, multiple factors are at play that require politeness strategies. This dialogue is taken from the movie rendition of the novel 大红灯笼高高挂 *Da Hong Deng Long Gao Gao Gua (Raise the Red Lantern)*, which takes place in the 1920s, eight years after the end of the Qing dynasty. This was a transitional period, as China was just starting to establish itself as a new republic under Sun Yat-sen. This dialogue occurs between 二太太 *er tai tai* (the second wife/first concubine) and 四太太 *si tai tai* (fourth wife/third concubine). In this scene, 二太太 gifts 四太太 with a silk fabric shortly after 四太太 marries into the household. It is a house-warming gift of sorts, a symbol of welcome to the newest member of the family. The act of giving a gift is a positive politeness act, since it compliments the receiver's positive face. It is establishing the gift giver's positive view of the gift receiver. By offering the gift, 二太太 is also seeking to promote solidarity and establish kinship; this strategy is called "claim of close relation" (Zhan 17).

In response, 四太太 responds that she could not receive this gift. She strategically addresses 二太太 as 二姐 *er jie* (second older sister), a kinship term, to reciprocate the invitation for closeness. In her polite and temporary rejection of the gift, 四太太

demonstrates an understanding of two nuances in the exchange. First of all, she recognizes that 二太太 has seniority in their relationship, since she entered the family before her, so she is higher in the household hierarchy. Furthermore, 二太太 is also presumably older in age. This difference in standing requires the younger to honor the elder and not the opposite. This is why 四太太 says that she should be the one giving the gift instead of receiving it.

In response to the polite rejection, 二太太 gives 四太太 reassurance to keep the gift by complimenting her and saying she is pleasing to the eyes/finds favor in her eyes which is another act of positive politeness. In the end, 四太太 accepts the gift and leaves the conversation believing 二太太 to be her friend and ally. Although the audience later learns that 二太太 is not genuine in her friendliness towards 四太太, 二太太 is so successful in employing the politeness strategies that she is able to accomplish her goal of presenting herself as trustworthy.

Negative politeness, on the other hand, is “oriented mainly toward partially satisfying (redressing) H’s negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination” (Brown and Levinson 70). Here, FTA stands for “Face Threatening Act”. The correct usage of negative politeness requires the speaker to understand his relative position to the person he is speaking to. It is not always appropriate to employ negative politeness strategies, as that can inappropriately distance the speaker from his listener. Unlike positive politeness, negative politeness tends to be less direct in its application. Common strategies of negative politeness are “softening the tone of speech” and “showing deference” (Zhan 42).

刘姥姥：原是特意来瞧瞧嫂子您，二来也请姑太太的安，要是能见一面更好了。。。若是不能啊就借着嫂子您，我们致意吧。

Liu lao lao: yuan shi te yi lai qiao qiao sao zi nin, er lai ye qing gu tai tai de an, yao shi neng jian yi mian geng hao le... ruo shi bu neng a jiu jie zhe sao zi nin, wo men zhi yi ba

Grandma Liu: First of all, I wanted to pay you, sister-in-law, a visit. Secondly, I also wanted to pay my respects to my esteemed sister. If I could see her, that would be even better... but if not, could you send my best regards to her for me?

周大娘：姥姥，请放心，大老远诚心诚意地来了，我哪儿能不让你见真佛就走了。

Jou da niang: lao lao, qing fang xin da lao yuan cheng xin cheng yi di lai le, wo na er neng bu rang ni jian zhen fo jiu zou le

Aunt Zhou: Grandma, do not worry. How could I not let you see the true Buddha after you've traveled such a long distance with a sincere heart to see her?

--

周大娘：你原是太太的亲戚，又拿我当个人儿，又投奔我来，我就破个例，通个信儿去。

Jou da niang: ni yuan shi tai tai de qin qi, you na wo dang ge ren er, you tou ben wo lai, wo jiu po ge li, tong ge xin er qu

Aunt Zhou: You are Tai Tai's relative, and you've treated me with respect, and came directly to me. I will make an exception and send a message over. (*Dream of the Red Chamber*)

This dialogue is taken from a scene in CCTV's 1987 adaptation of Cao Xueqin's novel, *红楼梦 Hong Lou Meng (Dream of the Red Chamber)*. The novel was written and takes place in the 18th century of the Qing Dynasty and explores the complex relationships within four large, wealthy families. The presence of extended family as well as numerous servants results in a multi-tiered hierarchy. The power and rank traditionally depend mostly on how close in relation one is to the head of the family and one's age, and this family is no exception to the rule. In every speaking event, the characters must take into account their rank relative to their addressee.

In this scene 刘姥姥 *Liu Lao Lao* (Grandma Liu), who claims to be a distant relative of the eldest and therefore highest ranked member of the Jia family, asks 周大娘

Zhou Da Niang (Aunt Zhou) for a favor. In order to highlight her closeness to the family, 刘姥姥 uses the kinship terminology of 嫂子 *sao zi*, which literally translates to sister-in-law but is used here as title of respect, to address 周大娘. In response, 周大娘 calls her 姥姥 *lao lao* which literally translates to “grandma on the mother’s side” even though they are not actually related to one another. This is another example of the claiming close relation strategy within positive politeness.

Asking a favor is an example of a Face Threatening Act (FTA), since it imposes upon the will and freedom of the addressee. It can harm the addressee’s negative face, since the addressee may feel socially compelled to fulfill a request they may not want to. In order to lessen the severity of the FTA, 刘姥姥 employs several negative politeness strategies. First, she shows deference by using the term 您 *nin*, which is the honorific form of the pronoun 你 *ni* which means “you”. Her use of 您 is especially noticeable here, since 刘姥姥 is the senior of 周大娘 in terms of age. Another strategy 刘姥姥 uses is indirectness. She only presents her real reason for her visit, to see 姑太太 *Gu Tai Tai*, after first asserting that she was there to call on 周大娘. Her indirectness leaves room for 周大娘 to interpret her intentions differently and therefore back out of fulfilling the favor. Before even giving 周大娘 time to respond to her request, 刘姥姥 then strategically provides an alternative to her original request by offering that 周大娘 could represent her in the event that she could not go visit 姑太太 in person. This gives 周大娘 a way to easily back out of fulfilling the favor while minimizing the harm done to her negative face.

Although 刘姥姥 left room for her to reject the request, 周大娘 agreed to do the favor in the end. By agreeing to go through with the favor, 周大娘 also alleviates embarrassment to 刘姥姥. She expresses that the favor is the least she could do considering the fact that 刘姥姥 is a relative to the head of the family, the one she calls 真佛 *zhen fo*, which literally translates to “the true Buddha”. In its usage here, it can be assumed that it is an honorific way of addressing the most revered member of the family. By responding with the rhetorical question of “how could I not let you see her”, 周大娘 continues with the indirectness that 刘姥姥 started with. The success of this encounter lies in the strategic linguistic maneuvers of both parties. By employing strategies to protect each other’s negative face, both parties are able to leave the conversation without compromising each other’s social image; 刘姥姥 can be viewed as considerate and 周大娘 as helpful.

In reality, positive and negative politeness strategies are usually used alongside each other. By employing a positive politeness strategy like giving a gift or a compliment, the speaker is both complimenting the receiver’s positive face and potentially threatening the hearer’s negative face. The gift or compliment can cause the hearer to feel indebted or obligated to return the compliment. This is especially seen in the Chinese culture, where people are instructed by Confucius in the *Book of Rites* that “what the rules of propriety value is that of reciprocity. If I give a gift and nothing comes in return, this is contrary to propriety; if the thing comes to me, and I give nothing in return, that is also contrary to propriety” (Lee 3). Because of this, the art of gift-giving

and receiving within the Chinese community has been a topic of interest. The process requires fluency and cultural competence.

In his autobiography, *Mao's Last Dancer*, Li Cunxin shares the story of his journey from Communist China to the United States. His story was later made into a movie in 2009. In one scene, the Chinese consul at Houston meets with Li Cunxin to give advice about how to conduct himself in the United States. At this point in his story, Li had just arrived in the United States and was enchanted by how different America was from how it was described to him as a child. The people seemed nicer. The buildings seemed fancier. Capitalist America was not as he had expected; it was much better. Being Li's only Chinese resource in Houston, the Chinese consul was automatically the most trustworthy person in Li's eyes. The Chinese consul had the responsibility of making sure Li's loyalty remained with China. In order to prevent Li's loyalties from swaying, he sternly instructed him to keep his distance from the American people and her culture.

领事：你看到的只是美国的一小部分，是比较好的一面，还有很多你眼睛没有看到的東西。不接受禮物，要禮貌，不輕信誰，特別是女的，會誤導你。有疑惑的時候，要以堅強的信念來支撐自己。記住了，你是在代表中國和中國人民。要讓你們美國東道主看到中國人的誠實，勤勞。

ling shi: ni kan dao de zhi shi mei guo de yi xiao bu fen, shi bi jiao hao de yi mian, hai you hen duo ni yan jing mei you kan dao de dong xi. Bu jie shou li wu, yao li mao, bu qing xin shei, te bie she nü de, hui wu dao ni. You yi huo de shi hou, yao yi jian qiang de xin nian lai zhi cheng zi ji. Ji zhu le, ni shi zai dai biao zhong guo he zhong guo ren min. Yao rang ni men mei guo dong dao zhu kan dao zhong guo ren de cheng shi, qin lao

Consul: You only saw a small part of America, the better side of America. There are still many things you have not seen. Do not accept gifts. Be polite. Do not naively trust anyone, especially women; they will lead you astray. When you have any doubts, you need to stick with your strong convictions for support.

Remember, you are a representative of China and the Chinese people. You must exhibit the honesty and hardworking nature of the Chinese people to your host family. (*Mao's Last Dancer*)

In this one-sided conversation, the Chinese consul gives Li a warning that there is more to America than meets the eye. While he doesn't explicitly tell Li what is dangerous about the United States, it is understood that the American capitalist ideology is what he wants to protect Li from. The strong convictions that the consul urges Li to stick to are the teachings of Communist China. In order to keep his distance from the American ideologies, Li is told to do several things: to not accept gifts, be polite, not trust anyone, and stay away from women. Through the American lens, "be polite" may easily be seen as contradictory to the other tasks of not accepting gifts and staying away from people. This is not necessarily the case here, however. Such acts as receiving gifts could potentially harm Li's negative face, especially since he cannot reciprocate. Li does not have the resources to return the favor, and this can put him—from a Chinese perspective—in a place of indebtedness. Such a position could be a vulnerable one to Li and can even be seen as impoliteness, since reciprocating is essential to being polite according to the teachings of Confucius. It can be assumed the consul had this in mind when delivering his words of advice. When interpreted this way, the distancing measures the consul advises Li to take may not be contradictory to being polite after all.

Although there are common elements, linguistic politeness utilizes unique strategies from culture to culture. This is often based on that culture's dominant philosophies. For China, that dominant philosophy has been Confucian philosophy. As influenced by Confucian philosophy, several key themes within Chinese politeness strategy are humility and focused attention on group membership (specifically of the family). These characteristics, though not politeness strategies themselves, underlie the

strategies of kinship terminology and honorifics that will be discussed in following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

Kinship Terminologies

In this chapter, I will investigate the impact of the most influential institution within the Chinese civilization and culture, the Chinese family, on Chinese politeness conventions. The unique role the family has in Chinese culture is the primary quality that differentiates Chinese politeness practices from others. Therefore, it is also the factor that causes deviations from universalized politeness studies like that of the previously discussed Brown and Levinson. To explain the uniqueness of Chinese linguistic politeness, Xinren Chen points to China's 'Family-culture' or 家文化 *jia wenhua*, which suggests that Chinese culture is "family-based and family-oriented", and uses it as a basis of politeness strategy (Chen 252). The evolution of the family unit and the accompanying changes in the use of kinship terminologies within linguistic politeness conventions will be evaluated from three different time periods: the imperial period of China (221 BC-1912 AD), the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949) and shortly afterwards, and contemporary China. The general trend has shown a decline in the family's role since imperial times. Even so, it is worthy to note that Xinren Chen's article was published only recently in 2019, showing that the influential role of family in Chinese politeness is still acknowledged today.

While other family-related politeness conventions exist, this chapter will focus on the use of kinship terminology as a politeness strategy. Kinship terminology, as defined by Encyclopedia Britannica, is the "system of names applied to categories of kin standing

in relationship to one another” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). While all cultures have kinship terms, the complexity of kinship systems may vary. The Chinese language has extensive kinship terminologies. This was especially true in imperial China, when the traditional values were established and integrated into both societal norms and the law. According to Hellström, being unfilial in imperial China was viewed as criminal; until the reign of imperial China ended in 1912, aspects of filial piety such as taking care of parents and venerating them after their death were “required by formal law” (Hellström 260).

In order to understand the necessity for complex kinship terms, it is necessary to study family structure in imperial China. The largest ideological influence during the imperial period was Confucius, who named filial piety as one of the most important and necessary virtues. To Confucius, familial relationships—specifically between the father and son—were meant to be a model for relationships within the Chinese empire at large. While Confucius saw the father-son relationship as the effector and government office as the affected, Helle instead views the political system as the effector and familial relationships as the affected. In his chapter on China’s kinship system, he suggests that the structure of the home during China’s imperial era mirrored the feudalist hierarchies of the political realm; the father-son relationship seen through this lens is closer to “superior and underling” (Helle 126). His outlook mostly stems from that of Granet, who understood filial piety to be “ritualized respect” that has nothing to do with “sentiments of emotional closeness between father and son” (Helle 125). This approach towards the Confucian teachings, while arguably a harsh one, can partially explain the marked difference in status and position of the father and the son in the household. More sensitive

readings of Confucius would suggest that reverential feeling, the emotional component, is necessary to filial piety as Confucius envisioned it.

While it is unclear whether feudalism first influenced kinship relationships or the other way around, some aspects of imperial China remain rather uncontested. The Chinese family system was patrilocal, meaning a newly wedded bride was expected to leave her own family to join her husband's family and honor her husband's ancestors (Helle 124). Once she was married, not only did she join her husband's family, but she also was no longer a part of her original family. Under these cultural expectations, women were not generally welcome back to their original homes—at least not for extended stays. She moved in with her husband and his relatives and submitted under their authority. When she had a child, that child assumed the husband's family name and was considered a descendant of the husband's family. This quality also explains why the kinship system is also described as patrilineal and agnatic, meaning that the family lineage and power were propagated through the husband.

In the 2001 historical television series 大宅门 *da zhai men* (*The Grand Mansion Gate*) about a family living in the Qing dynasty, the director Guo Baochang explores this concept with the character of 白雅萍 *Bai Ya Ping*, who is the only daughter of 白萌堂 *Bai Meng Tang*, the head of the household. The 白家 *bai jia* (Bai family) is large, powerful and rich. In many ways it represents the ideal family from the Confucian point of view, with “large numbers of kinsmen” and wives “held under the control of a patriarch imbued with the Confucian values of propriety and order” (Freedman 327). Although she is already married, 白雅萍 prefers to be in her own father's house. It can be assumed from the beginning that she is not treated well or does not have a good

relationship with her own husband. Her father allows her to stay under his roof, but he does not guard her from the criticism she faces for doing so. When she tries to have a say in family affairs, she is constantly reminded that she is no longer part of the 百家 *Bai jia* (Bai family).

大爷：涉事你就别再挑了行不行？你嫁出去就不是白家人了，再以后家里的事你少插嘴。

Da ye: she shi ni jiu bie zai tiao le xing bu xing? Ni jia chu qu jiu bu shi bai jia ren le, zai yi hou jia li de shi shao cha zui.

Da ye: Can you not meddle anymore? You are already married and are no longer part of the Bai family. From now on, do not interfere in our family's affairs.

姑奶奶：我就是主持个公道

Gu nai nai: wo jiu shi yao zhu chi ge gong dao.

Gu nai nai: I just want to uphold justice.

大爷：那到你的婆家主持公道去，天天泡在娘家算怎么回事啊。

Da ye: na dao ni de po jia zhu chi gong dao qu, tian tian pao zai niang jia suan zen me hui zi shi a.

Da ye: Then go to your husband's house to uphold justice there. What's going on with you always hanging around your parents' home?

姑奶奶：大哥，你也嫌我了。

Gu nai nai: da ge, ni ye xian wo le.

Gu nai nai: Oldest brother, you also are rejecting me.

大爷：不是我嫌你，我们应该尽尽孝道。

Da ye: bu shi wo xian ni, wo men ying gai jin jin xiao dao.

Da ye: It's not that I reject you. We just need to practice filial piety. (*The Grand Mansion Gate*)

The dialogue above is shared between the eldest son (who is referred to as 大爷 *da ye* within the household) and daughter (白雅萍, who is referred to as 姑奶奶 *gu nai nai*) of 白萌堂 *Bai Meng Tang*, the head of the household. Both 大爷 and 姑奶奶 are kinship terms meaning the oldest son of the family and the daughter of the family in this context. In this scene, 姑奶奶 attempts to help uphold justice within the household by

convincing her oldest brother 大爷 to expose the deceptive behavior of their youngest brother. As the eldest son of the household, 大爷 has the most authority apart from his father. He feels responsible for his siblings and is trusted by his father. Instead of welcoming her advice, 大爷 sees her well-intentioned intervention as meddling. He reminds her that as a married woman, she no longer belongs to the Bai family and therefore also has no voice in household matters. When she replies that she only wants to see justice delivered, he responds by saying that she can do so in her husband's home, since that is her family now.

While the above interaction may seem harsh to the Western reader, the response of 大爷 would actually be seen as appropriate in Qing China. In fact, throughout the series, the character of 大爷 represents many of the traditional Chinese virtues. In this dialogue, he even explains to his sister that his response to her is not a personal rejection but for honorable reasons when he urges her to practice filial piety. The filial piety she is required to practice is not to her father or her family. Rather, her duty is to honor her husband's ancestors, a task that cannot be done from the comfort of her father's home.

The traditional marriage model is expressed in the kinship terms that reflect affinal relations, relationships by marriage. Because of China's patrilineal system, the kinship terms of the maternal side of the family are relatively more marked with affixes such as *yue*, *jiu* or *yi* when compared to the less marked paternal relatives (Qian and Piao 4). This marking suggests that the paternal side of the family should be regarded as closer. This is especially obvious in the use of 外 *wai*, which means "outside", in kinship terms such as 外祖父 *wai zu fu* or 外祖母 *wai zu mu* which means maternal grandfather and maternal grandmother respectively (Qian and Piao 4). The paternal counterpart lacks

the *wai* and is only 祖父 *zu fu* and 祖母 *zu mu*. In this way, Chinese kinship terminology is more specific in identifying relatives on either side of the family.

In imperial China, not everyone had the opportunity to hold government office. While applications to government positions were technically open to everyone regardless of class, the gentry provided most of the men entering government positions, since only the gentry could afford the education in Chinese classical literature needed to pass the state examinations (Hellström 257). Through his philosophy, Confucius invited everyone into the honor of participating in government by designating the family unit as the smallest functioning unit of the country and government as a whole. When asked about taking part in the government, Confucius quotes from the *Book of History* saying, ‘Simply by being a good son and friendly to his brothers a man can exert an influence upon government’; he goes on to suggest that doing so goes beyond influence and can count as “taking part in government” (Confucius 66). The virtuous man was expected to serve his country by serving his family and vice versa.

Unavoidably, there were times when the interests of the family and government opposed each other. In those times, the individual had to decide where his loyalties lay. According to Freedman, that decision was made easier by the written law that “provided that certain relatives might legitimately conceal the offenses of one another (except in cases of high treason and rebellion), either escaping punishment altogether or suffering a penalty reduced in accordance with the closeness of the relationship; and that it was an offense generally for close kinsmen “to lay even just accusations against one another” (Freedman 324). In the end, the virtuous man often chose his familial duties over the country, and the law protected this decision. The government agreed to coexist with the

power of the kinship organizations, since those very same organizations were also a means of stability and control for the country as a whole (Freedman 325).

The relationship structures, particularly the one between the father and son, were also enforced by the economic system. Besides being the basic unit of government control, the Chinese imperial family was also the most basic unit of production (Hellström 257). This was true in family-run small businesses and in agriculture where the family farm could provide for about 80% of the family's needs (Hellström 261). Because of this, children often found their livelihoods within the walls of their homes. In this way, one's father often also doubled as one's boss. Within the family, only the head of the family had the authority to manage the entirety of the family's earnings (Hellström 261). This system made it especially essential for the son to practice filial piety towards the father during the father's life, since the son relied on his father for his livelihood. After the father got too old to manage the family's property, it was also expected of the son to return the favor by taking care of his father just as he was taken care of. In this way, both the young and elderly achieved financial security in imperial times.

Due to economic and cultural factors, many households, especially the wealthier ones, were multi-generational and housed extended families. Beyond the immediate family, the Chinese identified themselves based on their 族 *zu* (clan), a group that includes all people living in an area who descended from the same male ancestor (Hellström 258). Members of the same clan usually lived close to one another, if not under the same roof than in the same village or neighborhood; beyond just living in close proximity, members of the same clan also shared the same surname as a mark of their relatedness (Hellström 258). The clan formed somewhat of an alliance. It secured

stability within Chinese society. Living in such an interdependent and complex environment made it especially important to have very specific ways of addressing one another. For this reason, Chinese are more specific with their kinship terms than many other languages in that it specifies gender, relative age/seniority within the clan, and the difference between the maternal/paternal relations.

An example of the specificity in Chinese kinship terminology can be seen in a term as simple as 表哥 *biao ge*. Here, 表 *biao* is a marker indicating the maternal side of the family while 哥 *ge* means older brother. Together, 表哥 *biao ge* refers to an older male cousin on the maternal side of the family. A slightly more complex example is of 姑表弟 *gu biao di*, listed in Table IV of Chen's study (Chen 1238). Here, 姑 *gu* refers to father's sister, 表 *biao* acts as a maternal marker once again, and 弟 *di* means younger brother. When put together, the kinship term means father's sister's son who is younger than the speaker. In English, both 表哥 *biao ge* and 姑表弟 *gu biao di* would be translated as the same term—simply “cousin”.

While Chinese kinship terminologies are unique in their specificity and conciseness, the ways in which they are used especially set them apart. The use of kinship terms to address non-kin is a widely documented phenomenon within the Chinese politeness practices. In his article, Xinren Chen attempts to explain the reasons underlying this strategy through his ‘Family-culture’ lens. He explains it by proposing the Maxim of Addressing Closeness based on 一家亲 *yi jia qin*, which literally translates to “close as family”. Chen assumes that this worldview is common to the Chinese person, since many idioms such as 天下一家 *tian xia yi jia* (all people under the sky are one

family) and 四海一家 *si hai yi jia* (four oceans, one family) suggest that all people in the world are part of one family (Chen 258). It is polite, therefore, to address non-kin as kin in order to emphasize closeness and inclusion. According to this maxim, closeness approximates politeness while a show of distance assumes the opposite.

Zhan identifies a similar pattern of kinship terminology usage in his book about Chinese politeness strategies. He places the practice of extended usage of kinship terms under his strategy “Claim of close relation” and points out that it is common and expected to address strangers, neighbors, and acquaintances with kinship terms (Zhan 18). Although encouraged for fostering closeness, it is not socially expected for people of an older generation to address younger people or people of the same generation with kinship terms. However, it is absolutely necessary for people to utilize correct kinship terms when addressing people who have seniority (e.g. are older in age or of an older generation) in order to be polite. This ties into the traditional Chinese virtue of filial piety which often carries into respect for elders, regardless of relation. Zhan lists 大爷 *da ye* (first elder uncle), 大妈 *da ma* (first elder aunt), 大叔 *da shu* (first younger uncle), 大哥 *da ge* (big brother), and 大姐 *da jie* (big sister) as some common kinship terms used for acquaintances and strangers (Zhan 18-19).

The usage of extended kinship terminologies as a politeness strategy was especially prevalent in imperial China, where the feudal society heavily impacted the presence of hierarchy within all relationships. The aforementioned TV show 大宅门 *da zhai men* (*The Grand Mansion Gate*) features many examples of using kinship terms as a politeness strategy. Perhaps even more eye-catching, however, is an example of blatant impoliteness in the interaction between the character 景琦 *Jing Qi* and 武贝勒 *Wu Beile*.

武贝勒：老七，来坐。
Wu Bei Le: Lao qi, lai zuo.
Wu Bei Le: Old seven, come sit.

景琦：武贝勒。
Jing Qi: Wu Beile.
Jing Qi: Wu Baylor.

武贝勒：这么叫，合适吗？
Wu Bei Le: zhe me jiao, he shi ma?
Wu Bei Le: The way you addressed me--is it appropriate? (*The Grand Mansion Gate*)

Just from the way they address each other in the short interaction above, much can be learned about the relationship between the two characters. There are several dimensions governing how they are socially expected to treat each other. First of all, 武贝勒 *Wu Bei Le* is a generation above 景琦 *Jing Qi*, meaning he has seniority. In polite conversation, 景琦 would be expected to address 武贝勒 with a kinship term such as 叔叔 *shu shu* (uncle). Instead, he chooses to call him by his full name, which is incredibly disrespectful. In response, 武贝勒 immediately reacts to and points this out when he asks him pointedly, “Is it appropriate?”. Despite having been offended, 武贝勒 continues the conversation and reveals his reason for engaging 景琦—to ask a favor. This intention adds another dimension to this interaction and partially explains why 武贝勒 brushes aside the impoliteness of 景琦 and continues with the conversation. As the conversation continues, more is revealed about the identity of both speakers.

景琦：你想怎么着？要银子？
Jing Qi: ni xiang zen me zhe? Yao ying zi?
Jing Qi: What do you want? Silver?

武贝勒：不，我不要。可，可你不能不认我这个老岳父啊。
Wu Bei Le: Bu, wo bu yao. Ke, ke ni bu neng bu ren wo zhe lao yue fu a.

Wu Bei Le: No, I do not want any. But, but you can not refuse to acknowledge me as your old father-in-law. (*The Grand Mansion Gate*)

The above interaction reveals another dimension in the relationship between 景琦 and 武贝勒: 武贝勒 is the father in law of 景琦. This further intensifies how inappropriately 景琦 behaved in calling him by his first name. The politeness strategy of addressing non-kin as kin was so commonly practiced that such a mistake could not be a misunderstanding. It is clear from the context of the scene that the offense was not committed unknowingly but was in fact intentional.

Examples of using kinship terminology to address non-kin are abundant in the CCTV television series 红楼梦 (*Dream of the Red Chamber*). One such example happens between 周大娘 *Zhou Da Niang* and 刘姥姥 *Liu Lao Lao* upon seeing each other.

丫鬟: 一位姥姥找您了。
Ya huan: yi wei lao lao zhao nin le.
Servant girl: A grandma is here to see you.

周大娘: 哪位啊?
Zhou da niang: Na wei a?
Aunt Zhou: Who is it?

刘姥姥: 你好啊, 周嫂子。
Liu lao lao: Ni hao a, Zhou sao zi.
Hello, Sister-in-law Zhou.

周大娘: 刘姥姥你好啊。您说这才几年啊, 我差点儿认不出来了。请屋里坐
Zhou da niang: Liu lao lao ni hao a. Nin shuo zhe cai ji nian a, wo cha dian er ren bu chu lai le. Qing wu li zuo.
Aunt Zhou: Hello, Grandma Liu. It's only been a few years, and I almost did not even recognize you. Please come in to sit. (*Dream of the Red Chamber*)

In this scene, there are several instances of addressing non-kin with kinship terminologies. The first instance is when the servant girl refers to the visitor, who is a stranger to her, as 姥姥 *lao lao* which means grandma on the mother's side. The second

instance is when 周大娘 addresses the visitor as 刘姥姥, which means Grandma (on the mother's side) Liu, even though they are unrelated by blood or marriage. It is hinted here that they are only acquaintances, since 周大娘 notes that she hasn't seen 刘姥姥 in years to the point of almost not recognizing her; later on, that is confirmed. In response to the greeting, 刘姥姥 addresses 周大娘 as 周嫂子 *Zhou Sao Zi*, which means Sister-in-law Zhou, even though she is not her sister-in-law. The mutual use of kinship terms to address one another reflects a mutually held respect for each other.

For nearly two thousand years, the teachings of Confucius remained largely unchallenged. His legacy seemed immovable from Chinese culture, and his teachings became synonymous with Chinese tradition. For the most part, his teachings had served China well, as China had established itself as the major superpower of Eastern Asia and believed itself to be the most advanced kingdom in the world, an overly confident mindset John K. Fairbank calls 'The Chinese myth of central superiority' (Pan and Kádár 6). China was therefore rudely awakened from its claim of supremacy when it was met with the superpower of the West, Great Britain. It became clear rather quickly that China was no match for its Western enemy, and 中国 *Zhong Guo* (China)—literally translated as the "Center of the World"—suffered a series of humiliating defeats during the First Opium War (1839-1842). To the British, the war was a matter of economic interest. They simply wanted to ensure free trade with the country, especially after "the previous flow of silver into China now began to flow out of the country in order to pay for the ever-increasing demands for opium" in the mid-1820's (Anthony). As the Chinese sank deeper into opium addiction, the British traders prospered. Meanwhile, the emperor sought to do damage control. Internally, he punished Chinese opium addicts with imprisonment and

execution; in terms of foreign affairs, he sought to eliminate what he determined to be the source of his troubles, the British traders (Anthony). The war ended with the Treaty of Nanking, a treaty that solidified China's defeat by giving the British what they wanted—free trade and the island of Hong Kong (Pan and Kádár 5).

The previously unchallenged Chinese thought suffered trauma. Interacting with the Western world not only highlighted differences in societal advances, but it also revealed stark differences in culture, making the First Opium War “a clash of Chinese and Western cultures” (Anthony). The defeat of China at the hands of the British planted a seed of doubt in the Chinese mind. That seed would germinate with the 1911 revolution, but it would not be until the Communist Revolution that the plant would bear fruit.

If the government and the kinship organization previously existed in a symbiotically mutualistic and balanced relationship, it can be said that the Communist Revolution tipped the scales. After the Communist party came to power in 1949, the family institution underwent its own revolution when the terms of marriage were redefined by the 1950 Marriage Law written by Mao Zedong. This new set of guidelines sought to seize any remnants of Chinese feudalism and cast them away. The law effectively removed the power of making marriage decisions previously held by parents under the traditional system and re-allocated it to the individuals themselves; with this shift in power, individuals gained the right to choose partners for themselves and divorce them as well (Freedman 331). The group that was the most impacted was the women, as “an almost perfect symmetry of the rights of men and women is erected” by Mao for the first time in China (Freedman 331). The transition from tradition to modernity was far

from smooth, and while the women were expected to benefit the most, they in some ways also suffered the most loss. Young women who sought to exercise their newly found power of divorce were often prevented from doing so, while the older women who had finally gained the top position in their familial hierarchies resisted losing the positions they had worked hard for all their lives (Diamant 174).

With the introduction of divorce, the family institution seemed to grow shakier. Furthermore, as “parents lost their rights to bequest land to their children” with the collectivization of agriculture, they lost the position of economic influence they once held (Diamant 192). In 1958, the establishment of the people’s communes knocked down all that remained of family property, and with it, “the kinship organization as a basic unit in Chinese society is definitely destroyed” (Hellström 270). For the first time, people looked to their government for their every need. Suddenly, the family no longer seemed to be a safe haven of stability. Nor did it seem to be the provider. The value of filial piety fell behind that of modernity, and the result was an increase in abuse, neglect, and even murder of the elderly (Diamant 193).

As the strength and devotion to the family weakened, the people needed a new place to put their faith and hope. They chose the Chinese Communist Party. Mao’s new laws brought promises of equality never before seen in China, but his ultimate intent was to further the Communist agenda in China—something that could only be accomplished by eradicating “the concept of the family as the center of loyalty for the individual and to substitute the Party and ‘the people’” (Freedman 263). He was unmistakably successful. His people soon sang to him, proclaiming:

中国出了个毛泽东。
Zhong Guo chu le Mao Zedong.

From China emerges one Mao Zedong.

他为人民谋幸福，
Ta wei ren min mou xing fu.
He seeks happiness for the masses.

呼尔嗨哟，他是人民大救星！
Hu er hai you, ta shi ren min da jiu xing!
Cry out “Hurrah”! He is our people’s great savior! (“The East is Red”)

The verses above are taken from the iconic song, 东方红 *Dong Fang Hong* (“The East is Red”), which according to multiple sources including the Smithsonian, was the unofficial national anthem of China in the 1960s. While the people idolized their leader as a hero and a “savior”, they also saw him as one of them and often compared him to their family. In the song 唱支山歌给党听 *Chang Zhi Shan Ge Gei Dang Ting* (“Sing a Folk Song for the Communist Party”), Chairman Mao is compared to one’s mother:

唱支山歌给党听，我把党来比母亲；
Chang zhi shan ge gei dang ting, wo ba dang lai bi mu qin;
Sing a folk song to the Communist Party; I compare the Party with my mother;

母亲只生了我的身，
Mu qin zhi sheng le wo de shen
My mother only gave birth to me, but

党的光辉照我心。
Dang de guang hui zhao wo xin
the radiance of the Party shines upon my heart.

旧社会鞭子抽我身，
Jiu she hui bian zi chou wo shen,
The whip of old society lashed my body,

母亲只会泪淋淋；
Mu qin zhi hui lei lin lin;
Mother could only shed tears;

共产党号召我闹革命，
Gong chan dang hao zhao wo nao ge min,
The Communist Party called me to join the revolution,

夺过鞭子揍敌人。

Duo guo bian zi zou di ren.

To snatch the whip from my enemy and beat him. (“Sing a Folk Song for the Communist Party”)

This song, written in 1963, echoes the ideals of the Communist Revolution and foreshadows the spirit of the Cultural Revolution that would take place three years later. From the lyrics of this song, one can see how the people were taught to think about the Communist Party: as a family member who is more powerful, cares more deeply, and can provide more for its people than even a mother can.

The Communist Revolution brought about a new China. As the political changes of the revolution tore through the philosophies of the Chinese people, the need for a change in language became apparent. Mao sought to match language with ideology. The Communist Party cited the honorable mission of eliminating literacy as a motivation for language reform, but their agenda was more likely political: to “alter the Chinese cultural heritage” to enable “more efficient indoctrination of the people” and ensure “tighter control of mass organizations” (Hsia). In order to accomplish these goals, the Written Language Reform Committee led by Wu Yu-chang made plans that included simplifying Chinese characters, adopting a phonetic system for Chinese, and promoting the use of Mandarin over local dialects (Hsia). Beyond the technical changes in written language, spoken language also evolved to suit the new revolutionary mindsets. It was expected for people to abandon all traces of old China in their speech and adopt a politically correct vocabulary. Fengyuan captures the essence of Mao’s linguistic engineering in the following quote:

In Mao's China, the language of political movements was always dictated from above: people were never free to choose their linguistic symbols. Use of the correct, officially prescribed language was an outward sign of correct thought, and failure to use that language was an act of rebellion. So everyone used whatever linguistic formulae were attached to the current political movement. This was not an 'option', but a condition of survival. (Fengyuan 99)

As a result of the overthrow of feudal China, the previous prominent social hierarchies also collapsed. What used to be a polite way of addressing someone in old society was deemed no longer appropriate. The address form 同志 *tong zhi* (comrade) took its place as the predominant address form directly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Instead of emphasizing hierarchical differences in status that reflected old feudal society, 同志 *tong zhi* highlights “revolutionary solidarity, equality, and respect as well as intimacy among the revolutionary ranks” and was adopted by the high-ranking official and commoner alike and was appropriate in both formal and informal situations (Fang 496). Older address forms such as 先生 *xian sheng* (Mr.), 太太 *tai tai* (Mrs.), 小姐 *xiao jie* (Miss) passed away in common usage, being seen as no longer compatible with all that the new China stood for (Fang 500). At political rallies the new address form united all of the Chinese people, including Mao Zedong 同志, under one collective title, 同志们 *tong zhi men* (comrades) (Fang 497).

Under the new system, 同志 effectively replaced most Chinese honorific terms by the late 1980s (Pan and Kádár 79). The specificity and complexity of previous address terms could hardly be accomplished by only one term. At the same time, as the average size of the Chinese family continued to get smaller with modernization, the Chinese

people seemed to miss living in the midst of a bigger extended family. Therefore, “as the connotation of the new form *tongzhi* became fuzzy and ambiguous, kinship terms of address gained popularity in informal social interactions” and essentially filled the gap of what was missing (Pan and Kádár 83). Its prevalence in usage not only recovered but even seemed greater than before. Especially popular according to Pan and Kádár is the use of 大哥 *da ge* (big brother) and 大姐 *da jie* (big sister) to address men and women of similar rank and 大嫂 *da sao* (big sister-in-law) to address women of higher rank and age (Pan and Kádár 83).

The following interaction is taken from the movie 牧马人 *Mu Ma Ren* (*The Herdsman*) which was released in 1982 but depicts life in the 1950s, less than ten years after the Communist Revolution:

村里的人：真可怜。

Cun li de ren: Zhen ke lian.

A passing villager: Oh poor thing.

李秀芝：大叔，哪儿没有心好的人？你们能给我找一个吃饭的地方吗？我能干活。

Li Xiu Zhi: Da shu, na er mei you xin hao de ren? Ni men neng gei wo zhao yi ge chi fan de di fang ma? Wo neng gan huo.

Liu Xiu Zhi: Big uncle, aren't there kind people everywhere? Could you find me a place to eat? I can work.

村里的人：我要是再给你找个家行不行？

Cun li de ren: Wo yao shi zai gei ni zhao ge jia xing bu xing?

A passing villager: How about if I find another home for you, how would that be? (*The Herdsman*)

In the scene above, a young girl 李秀芝 *Li Xiu Zhi* enters a foreign village after escaping a famine in her hometown less than ten years after the Communist Revolution. Upon arriving, she finds that the villager she intended to marry has passed away, so she has nowhere to go. Helpless, she sits on the side of the road, waiting for a kind soul to

pass by. When a passing villager notices her and makes a remark about her pitiful situation, she immediately seizes the opportunity to ask for help. Although he is a stranger to her, she chooses to address the passing villager as 大叔 *da shu* (Big Uncle), instead of 同志 *tong zhi* (comrade) even though it would be the safest choice. Although 同志 *tong zhi* (comrade) would communicate the same level of respect, it could not communicate the same level of familial closeness. She chooses the kinship terminology to appeal to the stranger's compassion and invites him to think of her as family. By doing so, she moves the passing villager into doing a huge favor for her, even though he does not know her. Her boldness in asking the favor and her linguistic choices change the course of her life; the passing villager ultimately finds her a husband and a safe home. In this instance, the use of kinship terminology to address non-kin goes beyond politeness and encourages a stranger to show the kindness and selflessness usually reserved for family.

Addressing non-kin with kinship terminologies continues to be common in contemporary China. In the following example, the continued or even increased prevalence of using appropriate kinship terminologies to address someone in conversation is illustrated:

男朋友：大哥用车送菜太辛苦了，我说，你把我车拿去开。

Nan peng you: Da ge yong che song cai tai xin ku le, wo shuo, ni ba wo che na qu kai.

Boyfriend: It's so arduous for older brother to deliver groceries with his bike, so I told him, "Take my car and drive it."

父亲：心地善良，我看见你我就高兴。

Fu qin: xin di shan liang, wo kan jian ni wo jiu gao xin.

Father: You have a kind heart. It makes me happy just to see you.

男朋友：叔叔，您高兴就好。

Nan peng you: shu shu, nin gao xin jiu hao.
Boyfriend: Uncle, as long as you're happy, that's good.

父亲：都多长时间了，还叫叔叔？
Fu qin: dou duo chang shi jian le, hai jiao shu shu?
Father: It's already been how long, and you're still calling me "uncle"?

男朋友：爸爸
Nan peng you: ba ba.
Boyfriend: Father.

父亲：叫大哥！
Fu qin: jiao da ge!
Father: Call me big brother!

男朋友：啥？
Nan peng you: Sha?
Boyfriend: What?

父亲：以后咱俩论哥们儿。你不用娶我女儿了，我给你介绍更好的。
Fu qin: Yi hou zan lia lun ge men er. Ni bu yong qu wo nü er le, wo gei ni jie shao geng hao de.
Father: From now on, we are brothers. You don't have to take my daughter as your wife. I'll introduce even better candidates to you. (*CCTV's Chinese New Year Gala*)

The scene above is taken from 中央电视台春节联欢晚会 *Zhong Yang Dian Shi Tai Chun Jie Lian Huan Wan Hui* (*CCTV's Chinese New Year Gala*) which aired on the eve of Chinese New Year, February 11, 2021. Ever since it first aired in 1983, this yearly show has become arguably the most highly anticipated television event of the year in China (Ho). Similar to the dropping of the ball in Times Square in the United States, it has become a necessary part of ringing in the New Year. The show presents both traditional and modern Chinese culture and ranges in acts from martial arts, to Beijing opera, acrobatics, fashion shows, comedic skits, and stand-up comedy. It features China's most talented celebrities and performers. The show serves as a conduit of the Chinese government for delivering the messages of patriotism, unity, morality, and familial

warmth through the television screens to every Chinese family. It can safely be said then that the show is a wonderful representative for the Chinese people; even more so, the show depicts the standard—highlighting upstanding citizens and portraying the kind of person every Chinese should strive to become.

The dialogue is taken from a skit about the lives of several quarantined neighbors living during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The first kinship terminology employed by the boyfriend is directed towards a COVID-19 volunteer who delivers his groceries; he refers to him as 大哥 *da ge* (older brother), even though they have no familial ties and can be assumed to only be acquaintances. The bulk of the conversation, however, is shared between the boyfriend and father of a nurse working at the COVID-19 frontlines; in the written dialogue and analysis, I will simply refer to them as 男朋友 *nan peng you* (boyfriend) and 父亲 *fu qin* (father). There are multiple factors at play that define the nature of the speakers' relationships. The first and simplest is the generational/age difference between the boyfriend and father. Because the father of the girlfriend is of an older generation, it is expected for the boyfriend of his daughter to address him with a kinship term such as 叔叔 *shu shu* (uncle), which he does. This would be the case even if the father was a stranger or mere acquaintance.

While the boyfriend's address form of choice is appropriate from this perspective, its application is challenged by the girlfriend's father when he asks him why he still calls him 叔叔 *shu shu* (uncle) even after all that time together. This challenge appeals to the second dimension of their relationship. From the boyfriend's perspective, his relationship with his girlfriend's father needs to be both respectful and familial in nature, since they may become family through marriage. When his address form of 叔叔 is challenged, he

changes his address form to 爸爸 *ba ba* (father), a kinship terminology that is usually only reserved for either birth fathers or fathers-in-law. Meanwhile, his girlfriend's father has a very different idea and asks him to call him 大哥 *da ge* (big brother), a terminology that is usually used between people of similar age and rank. Both changes from 叔叔 to either 爸爸 or 大哥 serve to minimize the distance between the two speakers. However, the boyfriend seeks to emphasize the potential of becoming family with his choice of 爸爸, while the girlfriend's father promotes friendship and solidarity with 大哥. These different intentions can be seen in the father's later comment about how he would be willing to find some new romantic candidates for the boyfriend.

Beyond serving as a comedic tool, the conversation shared between the two characters shows the very important aspect of negotiating address forms, which is common in politeness strategies. Furthermore, it illustrates how the use of different kinship terminologies represents varying levels of relational distance. In a study published in 2015, this was studied from a cognitive neuroscience point of view. In order to investigate how the brain responds to different kinship terminologies, a research group including Haiyan Wu, Yue Ge, and others gathered twenty native Chinese speakers and twenty native Caucasian English speakers to complete the task of assigning appropriate kinship terminologies in their native language while simultaneously pressing a key on a keyboard (Wu et al. 3). The neuroimaging used while the test subjects completed their tasks was fMRI, short for functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, which shows brain activity by monitoring blood flow. The findings from the two different groups were compared to see how differences in native language affect how kinship terminologies are used and perceived.

Results from the study showed that Chinese participants had a longer reaction time (RT) and “showed greater activation than English-speaking participants” in six different regions (of the frontal and parietal cortices) of the brain when assigning kinship terminologies to distant kin when compared to the English-speaking Caucasian participants; these differences could possibly be explained by the more complex kinship terminology system in Chinese (Wu et al. 5). Of special interest is the heightened activity of the inferior parietal lobule (IPL) in the brains of Chinese participants, since IPL activity has been associated with the perception of spatial and social distance (Wu et al. 10). A proposed explanation for this increased IPL activity lies in the hierarchical nature of the traditional Chinese kinship system. Because of this traditional kinship structure, kinship terminologies carry multiple dimensions of meaning, signaling relational distance varying by age, gender, and generation (Wu et al. 10). This study therefore nicely supports the importance and effect of assigning an appropriate kinship term, both on the politeness and cognitive levels.

Even though the role of the Chinese family has undergone drastic changes since the time of Confucius, the value of kinship terminologies within Chinese politeness has remained. The clan system that once provided political stability to China has been dissolved, and the average Chinese family unit has gotten smaller. The necessity of complex kinship terms has therefore decreased, since extended kin no longer live with each other as they did in imperial times. In many ways, the Chinese Communist Party has worked to fulfill the role of the family and community that was lost. However, the Chinese people still seem to desire the familial closeness and warmth that can only be experienced with kin. In correspondence to this psychological need, the strategy of

referring to non-kin as kin has grown since the establishment of communist China and continues to be used within contemporary Chinese. This phenomenon distinguishes Chinese politeness from politeness strategies of others and reinforces China's 家文化 *jia wen hua* (family culture).

CHAPTER THREE

Honorifics

In the study of Chinese politeness, honorifics tend to occupy a large portion of research, as it is the strategy that especially sets Chinese, as well as other Eastern Asian languages, apart from others. Honorifics are phrases, terms, and politeness strategies that denigrate the self (the speaker) and elevate the other (hearer). Its usage is versatile and can range from address forms to verb phrases. Its origins are grounded in the depths of Chinese thought. Even as the Chinese language has undergone drastic changes, honorifics still remain a hallmark of Chinese politeness. In this chapter, I will explore how the role and use of honorifics in Chinese politeness began, persisted, and evolved from imperial to contemporary times. Specifically, I will investigate its usage in imperial China, the overall decline in its usage during and after the large political and ideological transitions of the May 4th Movement (1919) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976); and its resurgence after the Open Door Policy (1978). As with other chapters, the examples explored in this chapter will come from spoken dialogues in television shows and movies.

When compared to Western politeness, Eastern Asian politeness is most easily distinguished by its rich usage of honorifics. While the Western culture celebrates the individual and values self-efficacy and confidence, the traditional Eastern collectivist cultures (such as Japanese, Korean, and Chinese) tend to value modesty. This can be explained by the deeply ingrained Confucian influence. Since Confucius preferred to speak of earthly instead of heavenly things, the greatest goal he set forth for his

followers' lives was self-mastery, or developing into a benevolent man. When asked about benevolence, he reminded his followers that "to return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self constitutes benevolence" and "the practice of benevolence depends on oneself alone, and not on others" (Confucius 112). Because one must rely on himself for self-mastery, self-criticism was an essential part of the process. Confucius emphasizes the greater importance of being critical to oneself as compared to gaining the appreciation of others: "The gentleman is troubled by his own lack of ability, not by the failure of others to appreciate him" (Confucius 134).

In order to see clearly one's own faults, humility is essential. Confucius therefore names humility as a necessary virtue when he says, "The gentleman has morality as his basic stuff and by observing the rites puts it into practice, and by being modest gives it expression, and by being trustworthy in word brings it to completion" (Confucius 134). Humility is therefore directly associated with the practice of morality, and one's words play a large role in depicting character. Seeking the praise of others in action and speech opposes the practice of humility and frustrates constructive self-criticism. The act of speaking itself draws attention to the speaker, often indicates the presumption of being the most knowledgeable person in the room, and is often negatively correlated with taking action. Employing a laconic style in speech indicates humility, willingness to learn, and true wisdom. Because of this, Confucius said, "The mark of the benevolent man is that he is loath to speak" (Confucius 112). In his own life, Confucius demonstrated this despite being widely regarded as wise and learned by others: "In the local community, Confucius was submissive and seemed to be inarticulate. In the ancestral temple and at court, though fluent, he did not speak lightly" (Confucius 101).

While this approach may be deemed as destructive to self-esteem in the modern Western culture, it is seen as an honorable means of self-improvement through the Confucian lens.

When studying Chinese honorifics, one often encounters two gulfs. The first and most noticeable is the vast difference between its usage in imperial versus contemporary times. As China entered into modernity, formality of speech declined; the usage of 白话 *bai hua* (vernacular Chinese) became more popular than 文言 *wen yan* (refined language). Because honorifics are more often used in formal situations, its use waned as the people began to prefer vernacular Chinese. Furthermore, many of the rich Chinese honorific terms of imperial China were associated with the ruling class. As imperialism ended, those terms fell obsolete, causing the less careful observer to come to the incorrect conclusion that honorifics simply died with modernity.

The second gulf lies in the historically unequal distribution of honorifics among those who are educated and powerful and those who are uneducated and poor. Knowing how to properly employ politeness strategies required having a command of Classical Chinese literature, which was an impossibility for the illiterate population—a population that according to Pan and Kádár, was more than 80% of the imperial Chinese population (Pan and Kádár 65). This was especially apparent in imperial times, when the power gap was arguably the greatest in Chinese history. Confucius enforced this in his teachings about 礼 *li* (the rites, ritual propriety), when he consistently connects the practice of the rites with ruling the commoners: “When those above are given to the observance of the rites, the common people will be easy to command” (Confucius 131). Confucius directly instructs those in power to use the rites to better control the commoners. By extension, similar differences in expectations existed for the usage of honorifics. In other words, he

seems to suggest that “only the upper classes need to understand *li*, whilst members of lower classes need only to be deferential” (Pan and Kádár, “Historical vs. Contemporary Chinese Linguistic Politeness” 6).

As mentioned in previous chapters, imperial and feudal China were heavily characterized by a complex power hierarchy. Furthermore, as a collectivist society, the identity of the Chinese person was dependent on his community: “maintaining relationships is an integral part of communication because the Chinese self is defined by relations with others, and the self would be incomplete if it were separated from others” (Goh and Li 334). Therefore, one’s identity depended not on the name one made for himself but on external factors such as family background. Group membership was a larger factor than individual merit. Those at the top—the ruling class—were in the minority while most Chinese were grouped into the bottom rungs of society. Following a patriarchal hierarchy, Chinese society was divided into rulers and subjects, men and women, parents and children, and nobles and commoners (Lee 4). People were expected to follow 礼 *li* (the rites, ritual propriety) by practicing humility in their speech, employing appropriate elevating and self-denigrating strategies according to their relative social position. When speaking to someone of higher social standing, those at the relatively lower standing would be expected to self-denigrate while elevating those in higher relative standing. The starkest examples of this can be found in the communication between a ruler and his subjects, since the ruler was at the very top of the hierarchy.

A primary expression of honorifics was through address forms. The variety and specificity of the address forms reflected the complicated social hierarchies in place at the time. While it is unknown exactly how many address forms existed, it can be safely

assumed to be in the thousands (Pan and Kádár 44). Address forms commonly exist in pairs; for every elevating term, there is often a self-denigrating counterpart. As a rule, the elevating form was used to refer to others, and the denigrating term was reserved for the self. While elevating those of higher social standing was absolutely necessary, it was also customary to elevate those of similar standing in polite speech. Some common honorific terms of address used in imperial China are listed with their corresponding self-denigrating address form in Table 1 (page 61 of this thesis). The terms are gathered from Lee's article, "Linguistic Politeness in the Chinese Language and Culture" as well as the World Heritage Encyclopedia's "Chinese honorifics".

The elevating and denigrating address forms shown in Table 1 are rather specific and strict, mirroring the social environment of the time. Instead of eliminating the social distance between speakers by emphasizing common ground, a common strategy used in modern politeness strategies, these terms specifically highlight the separations between the powerful and powerless. These terms served as constant reinforcers of the established order and maintained the distance between the lower and upper classes in society, preventing any chance of social mobility.

In the 2015 movie 王朝的女人杨贵妃 *Wang Chao De Nü Ren Yang Gui Fei* (Lady of the Dynasty: Yang Gui Fei), the strict usage of honorifics is depicted in the conversations among the members of the royal family. The movie is based on the character of 杨贵妃 *Yang Gui Fei*, an imperial concubine during the Tang Dynasty. In the following dialogue, the sovereignty of the Chinese emperor is illustrated in his dealings with two emissaries from the Roman Empire:

皇帝：听说使臣阁下精通乐律。
Huan Di: Ting shuo shi chen ge xia jing tong yue lu.

Emperor: I heard, Sire, that you are a master of music.

罗马帝国的使者：如陛下所知，音乐确是我生活的重要部分。

Luo ma di guo de shi zhe: ru bi xia suo zhi, yin yue que shi wo sheng huo de zhong yao bu fen.

Roman Empire emissary: As your majesty knows, music is indeed an important part of my life.

皇帝：如阁下不介意，我想听贵国的哀歌。

Huang di: ru ge xia bu jie yi, wo xiang ting gui guo de ai ge.

Emperor: If you don't mind, Sire, I would like to hear an elegy from your (precious/honorable) country.

罗马帝国的使者：如蒙陛下恩准，我有家乡的颂歌。

Luo ma di guo de shi zhe: ru meng bi xia en zhun, wo you jia xiang de song ge.

Roman Empire emissary: With your majesty's permission, I have joyous carols to offer from my homeland

皇帝：你可以把它留待下次，朕今天要哀歌。

Huang di: ni ke yi ba ta liu dai xia ci, zhen jin tian yao ai ge.

Emperor: You can save it for next time. I want to hear an elegy today.

Within the conversation above, several honorific terms from Table 1 are used.

Most notable is the way the emperor is addressed by others and how he addresses himself. To address the emperor, the emissary from the Roman empire uses the honorific term, 陛下 *bi xia* (your majesty). When addressing himself, the emperor uses the term 朕 *zhen* (I), a first person pronoun reserved only for the emperor. The emperor also uses the honorific terms 贵 *gui* (precious, honorable) and 阁下 *ge xia* (sire, lord) when describing the emissaries' country and addressing the emissaries. This conversation represents a successful exchange, since both parties demonstrated a strong command of Chinese honorifics.

As the modern world progressed, imperial China seemed to lag farther and farther behind. Soon, it became clear that it could no longer exist in the 20th century world. In 1912, China's last emperor Puyi was finally forced to step down from rule, and imperial

China came to an end after roughly 2,000 years. As the person who formerly sat at the highest point of power fell from his position, the social model the emperor represented, along with the philosophy supporting it, was shaken. The measures that had kept imperialism in place had finally failed. The people once regarded their emperor as 天子 *tian zi* ('Son of Heaven'); the whole system could only work if the people truly believed and feared their ruler. Their deference depended on it. With the emperor defeated, the power structure shifted. Because honorifics were originally placed to emphasize the power differences between individuals living in a strict hierarchy, the defeat of this system also signaled the beginning of the end to such polarizing terms. Referring to oneself with vividly degrading terms such as 奴才 *nu cai* ('slave person') or 贱妾 *jian qie* ('lowly concubine', worthless wife) began to fall out of use, since it highlighted the stark power differences of feudal China. Furthermore, as there was no longer an emperor or royal family, the end of imperialism brought an end to using the rich honorific language specific to royalty. This was perhaps the most direct consequence that the fall of imperialism had on Chinese honorifics.

With the collapse of imperialism, China entered a transitional period of finding new identity. Before it could gain sure footing, however, the horrors of World War I tore apart the world, and China made an easy target. Japan specifically had its eyes on China. On January 18, 1915, the Japanese presented the infamous Twenty-One Demands to China; in it, Japan attempted to lay claim to a large portion of China, including Manchuria and Shantung, and sought administrative control over the whole country (Tse-tsung 20). The Japanese demands sparked widespread outrage among the Chinese people, especially among the young intellectuals. A strong sense of national unity rose up among

the Chinese people, but it could not deliver China from its trials. On May 9, 1915, the Chinese government accepted the terms, hoping the future end to the war would later come to its rescue, and the Sino-Japanese Treaty was established (Tse-tsung 21).

In response, the people cried out for their country. The country was utterly humiliated and in desperate need for a savior. While the uneducated masses yearned to return to the safety of tradition, dreaming about “the return of a ‘real dragon emperor’” to rescue China, other groups believed China’s salvation lay ahead, and not behind them (Tse-tsung 41). One of the largest and most vocal groups included the young intellectuals in the universities of Beijing. Although they addressed the most immediate issue by making statements and holding protest meetings to ‘unanimously oppose foreign aggression’, their purpose and influence extended beyond that (Tse-tsung 99). To them, the issue at hand was not only oppression by foreign powers, but their aim was “the creation of a new China” through the “substitution of new thought for the old and traditional” (Tse-tsung 289). In their eyes, traditional Chinese thought had failed them. They found its old philosophies incompatible with its new system. Influenced by Western ideas, primarily of realism, utilitarianism, and individualism, Chinese university students organized and mobilized themselves quickly (Tse-tsung 294).

The gathering of those young intellectuals led to the May 4th Movement; although the movement was named after the mass protest in Beijing on May 4, 1919, it actually only represents a slice of the larger New Culture Movement in China, which lasted a span of many years. Influenced by the American and French revolutions, reformers sided with democracy and science while taking active stances against tradition, namely Confucianism (Tse-tsung 293). They saw Confucianism as a primary tool of

manipulation and as a hindrance to progress. An active member of the New Culture Movement, Wu Yu shares his stance on Confucianism:

Confucius was, of course, a great personage in his day. But if one adheres to his doctrines and uses them to direct the whole world and the later ages, one will obstruct the development of culture. To do so is to fan the flame of absolutism.

We have to launch an assault against those who dare to do so. (Xiao and Li 523)

As the country reached a peak of nationalism and unity caused by foreign threat, the students capitalized on this and sought to draw the powerless and powerful together. One way they did this was through their language. During and after the May 4th Movement, one of the most noticeable changes within Chinese was the decrease in usage of Classical Chinese and increase in usage of 白话 *bai hua* (vernacular Chinese) in writing (Pan and Kádár 44). From the literary standpoint, Classical Chinese was incredibly complex. Only the most educated Chinese could understand and use it. Furthermore, Classical Chinese literature gestured towards the imperial system. The strategic adoption of vernacular Chinese within the intellectual community opened the door to increased literacy among the Chinese people and lessened the gap between the educated and uneducated. During the May 4th Revolution, the students employed vernacular Chinese in their most widely distributed writings such as the Manifesto of All the Students of Peking (Tse-tsung 106). Traditional Chinese was rarely used, and when used, was often employed mockingly and rarely distributed. An example of when the students used Classical Chinese was when they held “traditional Chinese mourning phrases doctored with sarcasm” during protests; they sarcastically mourned for those they considered to be traitors—the diplomats and ministers to Japan (Tse-Tsung 108). Because

honorifics were primarily used within formal contexts previously associated with Classical Chinese, such efforts to replace and mock Classical Chinese resulted in an overall decreased usage of honorifics.

What the May 4th Movement began the Cultural Revolution settled. The Cultural Revolution took place from 1966 to 1976, starting less than two decades after the takeover of the Communist Party and the founding of the People's Republic of China. Its self-proclaimed mission statement was to obliterate the inequality associated with the patriarchal, feudal China of old. In order to promote feelings of equality within social interactions, most honorific address terms listed in Table I such as 老爷 *lao ye* (“old master”) were replaced with the term 同志 *tong zhi* (comrade), as discussed in chapter two. In the family, husbands and wives began to refer to each other simply as 爱人 *ai ren* (lover), which diminished the division of status between men and women (Fang and Heng 7). However, the Cultural Revolution could only bring equality in limited arenas and to a superficial degree. In reality, it only replaced the old power hierarchy with a new one. The social structure suffered a one hundred eighty degree flip. Those who previously had power—the wealthy, educated people of good breeding—found themselves at the lowest levels of society, being labeled as class enemies. Meanwhile, the commoners who posed no threat to Mao's leadership were deemed to be of ‘good’ or ‘red’ class backgrounds. According to Fengyuan, Mao established these opposing classes in order to keep “the class struggle alive” (Fengyuan 95). What ensued was violent factional warfare between the classes.

Mao set out to cultivate a whole new breed of revolutionaries. He sought to change people from the inside out. People's everyday lives became saturated with the

symbol of revolution. One of the most powerful tools to bring revolution into the family and community was the Mao Zedong Thought Study Class, a system of group studies meant to convince and unite communities under the quotes of Mao (Leese 175). On the larger scale, the Chinese Communist Party heavily employed linguistic engineering, the ‘conscious employment of language to transform traditional worldviews by altering content down to the level of single words or characters’ (Leese 181). Mundane words were suddenly infused with new revolutionary meaning. Revolutionary language became a weapon of choice for revolutionaries; as the use of language became so heavily monitored, the “possibilities to attack others on grounds of revolutionary impurity were widened ad libitum” (Leese 181).

Correct language indicated correct revolutionary thought. The use of incorrect language, even by accident, had the potential to label a person as a class enemy and effectively ruin a life. Those labeled as counter-revolutionaries were prescribed Mao’s thoughts as treatment. To uproot the evils of the old system out of people, the revolutionaries “compelled former landlords and capitalists to recite the same revolutionary phrases”, hoping that the repetition would make the words ring true in their minds (Fengyuan 99). The correct words were used as a self-protective measure; their actual meaning diminished as freedom of diction was taken away. Employing politically correct diction was not an option but a necessity according to Fengyuan. Because of this, historian Rana Mitter “remarked that the Cultural Revolution probably was the period in twentieth-century history during which ‘language was most separated from meaning’” (Leese 181).

The Cultural Revolution sought to rid China of the 四旧 *si jiu* (“four olds”): old thinking, old customs, old culture, and old tradition; any and every remnant of the “four olds” were discarded of by the Red Guards (Pan and Kádár 142). People who belonged to the categories of the “four olds” were abused and humiliated physically and verbally. Revolutionaries were encouraged to violently denigrate them, using extremely crude language. In fact, the Cultural Revolution elevated the vulgar language previously associated with lack of refinement while refined language declined (Pan and Kádár 88). Polite expressions previously taken for granted like 请 *qing* (please), 谢谢 *xie xie* (thank you), and 对不起 *dui bu qi* (sorry) fell out of common use (Pan and Kádár 87). As a general rule, denigration was reserved primarily for class enemies, while elevation was reserved for Mao and other Communist Party members and heroes. The level of elevation was so strong, that Leese Daniel equates Mao’s followers to a cult and views their praise as a “Rhetoric of worship” towards Mao and his thoughts (Leese 183).

In a scene from the movie *Mao’s Last Dancer* which takes place during the Cultural Revolution era, the fervor and praise associated with the Chinese Communist Party are apparent as a teacher invites her class to greet the visitors to their class, government officials from the capital, with song. The way the visitors are received shows the extreme honor associated with the Chinese Communist Party. It is clear that the government officials occupy the highest levels of the social hierarchy. In a time when honorifics were rarely used, the teacher uses the honorific-elevating term, 贵 *gui* (expensive, precious) to honor the special guests:

同学们，这三位领导是从我们伟大的首都，北京来的贵客。欢迎！
Tong xue men, zhe san wei ling dao shi cong wo men wei da de shou du, Beijing lai de gui ke. Huan ying!

Students, these three leaders are (expensive, precious) guests from our great capital, Beijing. Welcome! (*Mao's Last Dancer*)

Needless to say, the decade long Cultural Revolution had consequences that persisted for decades longer. In Post-Cultural Revolution China, a lack of linguistic politeness in most interactions became the norm, and polite expressions became viewed as old-fashioned and overly formal (Pan and Kádár 114). It was not until after the Open Door Policy of 1978 and subsequent 'beautification of speech' campaign that linguistic politeness was revived along with some other traditional values (Gu 240).

While the damage done by the Cultural Revolution to the honorific tradition seemed permanent, some aspects of the tradition still remain. Some honorific expressions still in use are listed in Table 2 (page 62 of this thesis); the terms are gathered from Lee's article, "Linguistic Politeness in the Chinese Language and Culture." According to the findings in "Looking Up to Others", honorifics seem to still carry psychological meaning to modern Chinese speakers. In order to explore whether or not "abstract concept *social status* indicated by Chinese honorifics activates a spatial up-down schema (higher social status--up; lower social status--down", researchers invited native Chinese speakers to participate in multiple experiments (Lu et. al 78). In the first experiment, the participants were asked to go through a series of small tests involving hitting a computer key when they saw an elevating word and a different key when they saw a denigrating word. Then, the participants were shown an elevating or denigrating word followed by an image of either an up or down arrow. They were asked to identify the direction the arrow was pointing by clicking the up or down arrow on their keyboard (Lu et. al 79). The researchers hypothesized that the Chinese test subjects would more quickly identify the *up* spatial orientation when presented with elevating words and the *down* spatial

orientation when presented with denigrating words (Lu et. al 78). This prediction was confirmed by the results of the first experiment, since “detecting the direction of an arrow was relatively faster if it was preceded by a Chinese honorific that was congruent in its metaphorical implications” (Lu et. al 80). These results indicate that honorific terminologies still carry an implicit meaning of spatial hierarchy to the average native Chinese speaker.

An example of the conventional usage of some of the most commonly used honorifics, such as 您 *nin* (you), is seen in the scene from the 2021 broadcasting of 中央电视台春节联欢晚会 *Zhong Yang Dian Shi Tai Chun Jie Lian Huan Wan Hui* (CCTV’s Chinese New Year Gala):

志愿者：这位大爷，他非要出来当志愿者了。

Zhi yuan zhe: zhe wei da ye, ta fei yao chu lai dang zhi yuan zhe le.

Volunteer: This older gentleman/uncle is insisting that he become a volunteer.

大爷：小黄同志，你看看现在，各行各业都在全力以赴抗击疫情。他非得让我在家呆着，瞅我能呆得住么？

Da ye: xiao huang tong zhi, ni kan kan xian zai, ge hang ge ye dou zai quan li yi fu kang ji yi qing. Ta fei dei rang wo zai jia dai zhe, chou wo neng dai de zhu me?

Older Gentleman/Uncle: Comrade Huang, people of all professions and walks of life are all coming together to fight the pandemic. He insists that I should stay home, but how could I be okay with staying home when all this is going on?

小黄：我说老领导啊，您在家呆不住啊，那我每天给您唱唱歌，解解闷儿好不好？

Xiao huang: wo shuo lao ling dao a, nin zai jia dai bu zhu a, na wo mei tian gei nin chang chang ge, jie jie men er hao bu hao?

Little Huang: I’ll say, Old Leader, since you can’t seem to be at peace staying home, how about I sing for you every day--and maybe relieve some of your boredom? (2020 Spring Festival Gala)

In the above dialogue, the first notable term of address, 大爷 *da ye* (uncle), is a kinship term that implies respect to the addressee. This choice of address is appropriate for the volunteer to use, since he comes from a younger generation than the person he

addresses. When there is no difference in generation, as seen between neighbors 大爷 *da ye* and 小黄 *Xiao Huang*, what becomes more important is relative social status. One gets the sense that 大爷 *da ye* considers 小黄 *Xiao Huang* to either be a subordinate or equal, since he addresses her as 小黄同志 *Xiao Huang tong zhi* (Comrade “Little” Huang), which is a very neutral address form. Furthermore, 小黄 *Xiao Huang* seems to indicate lower perceived status when she addresses 大爷 *da ye* with the elevating term, 老领导 *lao ling dao* (“Old leader”). The term 老领导 *lao ling dao* implies previously held leadership, most likely within the Chinese Communist Party. Another clue of the relative status between 大爷 *da ye* and 小黄 *Xiao Huang* comes from pronoun choice of either 您 *nin* (formal “you”) or 你 *ni* (informal “you”). 小黄 *Xiao Huang* refers to 大爷 *da ye* with the formal, honorific pronoun 您 *nin* while she is referred to with the informal pronoun 你 *ni*. From the honorifics used, one can guess the relative status of the two neighbors.

As seen in the above dialogue, elevation as a politeness strategy still exists within contemporary Chinese, even despite its overall decline in usage. This is especially true in formal or business settings, as it is commonly considered the safer option to elevate one’s speaking partner in business situations. However, the article “Does the use of honorific appellations in audit reports connote higher financial misstatement risk?” introduces a different perspective. In the article, the researchers predict a correlation between increased usage of honorific addresses by auditors (to address their clients) to an increased probability of financial misstatements (Chen et. al 155). Their results confirm their prediction, indicating a 1.31% increase in probability of financial misstatements in clients addressed by the honorific phrase 贵公司 *gui gong si* (your esteemed company) as

compared to clients addressed only by their company name (Chen et. al 155). The researchers explain this phenomenon by asserting that a sense of inferiority or perceived lower status in auditors may accompany their usage of honorifics to address their clients. This lack of confidence could then affect the auditors' ability to detect, report, and correct their clients' financial misstatements. Their explanation is consistent with the historical usage of elevation. Because self-denigration was historically used alongside the elevation of the other, the elevating terms themselves seem to also carry an implicit meaning of self-denigration, even in the mind of the contemporary Chinese speaker.

Perhaps even more common than other-elevating is the use of self-denigration within contemporary Chinese politeness. Within self-denigration, there are two general categories that exist: 1) sincere, traditional usage 2) evolved, insincere usage. The sincere usage of self-denigration may be as obvious as using self-denigrating terms such as 敝 *bi* (worn out, broken, tattered) or 愚 *yu* (foolish) or as subtle as acting from awareness of relative lower status. One act of self-denigration that illustrates both the obvious and the subtle is illustrated in what Gu calls the "introducing-each-other interaction" (Gu 246). Upon meeting someone for the first time, it is customary to first ask for the name of the speech partner before introducing oneself. Similarly, if an inferior and superior are both aware of each other's presence, it is expected for the inferior to address the superior first (Gu 251). Both of these acts subtly indicate humility and self-denigration, since it gives the other person the first chance to speak. In his article, Gu notes that it is often more common in English to first self-introduce before asking a speech partner his/her name (Gu 246). Within the introductory conversation, 贵姓 *gui xing* (precious surname) and 贱姓 *jian xing* (worthless surname) may be used to refer to the surnames of the speech

partner and the self respectively. As it utilizes self-denigrating terminology, this represents more direct usage.

As China has progressed not only politically but also technologically, the application of self-denigration has also evolved. In the article, “Self-Denigration in 21st Century Chinese”, Zhou and Kádár draw on data from computer-mediated communication (CMC) and interviews to investigate how contemporary Chinese speakers, especially of the younger generation, employ and build upon the tradition of self-denigration within Chinese politeness (Zhou and Kádár 1). After conducting interviews with forty-eight native Chinese speakers of different ages and social backgrounds to determine how participants viewed the relationship between self-denigration and politeness, searches of commonly mentioned denigrating terms were then conducted on popular social media platforms (Zhou and Kádár 5). In conventional usages of self-denigrating phrases, people within virtual chatrooms often substituted terms with emoticons. An example of this was documented when a student referred to himself as a 高三狗 *gao san gou* (*third year dog*); other mentions of this self-denigrating phrase were accompanied by dog emoticons (Zhou and Kádár 13).

Beyond being used as a tool to indicate sincere humility, self-denigrating expressions are often used in humorous—and specifically sarcastic—contexts. This type of usage strays from that of tradition, as it does not truly indicate deference, and seems to be uniquely contemporary. An example of this can be seen in the following chatroom post found in Zhou and Kádár’s research:

原帖:我的白荷弟弟也结婚了, 时间过得好快, 我也老了。臣妾容颜以老, 陛下! 你还爱我吗!!

Wǒ de bái hé dì dì yě jié hūn le, shí jiān guò dé hǎo kuài, wǒ yě lǎo le. Chén qiè róng yán yǐ lǎo, bì xià! Nǐ hái ài wǒ ha!!

Poster: ‘My younger brother Baihe has got married too. How time flies! I’m getting old now. Chenqie (your humble concubine) is old, my emperor, do you still love me?’ (Zhou and Kádár 18).

In the above example, the poster cleverly utilizes the self-denigrating phrase 臣妾 *chen qie* (humble concubine) and the elevating phrase 陛下 *bi xia* (your majesty). Both of these phrases, in their sincere usage, have no place in contemporary Chinese. They belong only to the imperial period. However, in this context, they are used as humorous elements. The juxtaposition between the modern with the imperial context provides a backdrop for sarcasm.

Since springing up from Confucian philosophy, the usage of honorifics within Chinese politeness has risen and fallen alongside the waves of change within China. Major political turning points such as the fall of imperialism, May Fourth Revolution, and Cultural Revolution deeply challenged Confucian philosophy and the place of honorifics within Chinese. As a result of the end of imperialism and the introduction of communism within China, many honorific terminologies became obsolete. Especially in the time during and directly after the Cultural Revolution, Chinese politeness and Classical Chinese became symbols of old, incorrect thought. Most honorifics, along with most other politeness conventions, fell out of use. Even so, the strong honorific tradition survived and resurfaced. While the ways honorifics are used today have evolved and taken new forms with modernity, the strategies of elevation and denigration still live on in the minds and mouths of native Chinese speakers. As Sheena Dizon puts it in her article written on Fluentu.com (a website dedicated to helping people speak Mandarin fluently), “if you really want to reach a high level of fluency (or simply sound more natural), you need to start incorporating them [honorifics] into your daily language

practice” (Dizon). Honorifics continue to be a distinguishing characteristic of Chinese politeness and are a necessary mark of fluency.

Table I: Honorifics of Imperial China	
Elevating Terms of Address (address others)	Denigrating Terms of Address
In the family	
千金 <i>qian jin</i> ('thousand gold'/Venerable daughter) *used to address others' daughters	小女 <i>xiao nü</i> ('small woman'/worthless daughter) *used to address own daughter
官人 <i>guan ren</i> ('official person') 老爷 <i>lao ye</i> ('old master') *used by wife of a government official to refer to husband	
贤妻 <i>xian qi</i> (virtuous wife) *used by husband to refer to wife	贱妾 <i>jian qie</i> ('lowly concubine', worthless wife) *used by wife to refer to self
	贱内 <i>jian nei</i> ('lowly inside', humble wife) 拙荆 <i>zhuo jing</i> ('clumsy wife') *used by husband to refer to wife
In official business	
高君 <i>gao jun</i> ('high lord')	小人 <i>xiao ren</i> ('small'/worthless person) 小民 <i>xiao min</i> ('small commoner') 草民 <i>cao min</i> ('grass commoner')
老爷 <i>lao ye</i> (senior master)	奴婢 <i>nu bi</i> (female servant)
大人 <i>da ren</i> ('big person', your honor)	下官 <i>xia guan</i> ('lowly official')
Before the Emperor	
陛下 <i>bi xia</i> (your majesty) 圣上 <i>sheng shang</i> (your holiness) 天子 <i>tian zi</i> ('Son of Heaven') *used to address the emperor	寡人 <i>gua ren</i> ('lonely person') *only used by the emperor to refer to himself 朕 <i>zhen</i> (I) *first person pronoun "I" only used by emperor when referring to self
	微臣 <i>wei chen</i> (humble servant) *used by officials to refer to themselves in conversation with the emperor
	奴才 <i>nu cai</i> ('slave person') *used by eunuchs and other lower ranking people to refer to themselves in conversation with emperor

Table 1. Commonly used honorifics of imperial China

Table 2: Honorifics of Contemporary China	
Other-elevating prefixes	Self-denigrating prefixes
贵 <i>gui</i> (<i>precious, expensive</i>) Ex: 贵国 <i>gui guo</i> (<i>your country</i>), 贵公司 <i>gui gong si</i> (<i>your company</i>), 贵姓 <i>gui xing</i> (<i>your family name</i>)	敝 <i>bi</i> (<i>worn out, broken, tattered</i>) Ex: 敝国 <i>bi guo</i> (<i>my country</i>), 敝公司 <i>bi gong si</i> (<i>my company</i>)
令 <i>ling</i> (<i>good, excellent</i>) Ex: 令堂 <i>ling tang</i> (<i>your mother</i>), 令郎 <i>ling lang</i> (<i>your son</i>)	家 <i>jia</i> (<i>house, family, home</i>) Ex: 家父 <i>jia fu</i> (<i>my father</i>), 家母 <i>jia mu</i> (<i>my mother</i>)
贤 <i>xian</i> (<i>capable, talented, virtuous</i>) Ex: 贤弟 <i>xian di</i> (<i>your virtuous younger brother</i>), 贤妹 <i>xian mei</i> (<i>your virtuous younger sister</i>)	愚 <i>yu</i> (<i>foolish</i>) Ex: 愚兄 <i>yu xiong</i> (<i>foolish elder brother</i>), 愚弟 <i>yu di</i> (<i>foolish younger brother</i>)
高 <i>gao</i> (<i>high, tall</i>) Ex: 高见 <i>gao jian</i> (<i>your esteemed/brilliant opinion/advice</i>), 高就 <i>gao jiu</i> (<i>high employment</i>), 高寿 <i>gao shou</i> (<i>high age</i>)	
尊 <i>zun</i> (<i>honorable, esteemed</i>) Ex: 尊驾, 尊夫人	
老 <i>lao</i> (<i>old</i>) Ex: 老 + surname	晚 <i>wan</i> Ex: 晚辈 <i>wan bei</i> (<i>later-generation</i>), 晚生 <i>wan sheng</i> (<i>the later-born one</i>)
Other-elevating pronouns	
您 <i>nin</i> (<i>you</i>)	
Other-elevating verb phrases	Self-denigrating verbs phrases
恭 <i>gong</i> (<i>respectful</i>) Ex: 恭候 <i>gong hou</i> (<i>respectfully wait</i>), 恭祝 <i>gong zhu</i> (<i>respectfully wish</i>), 恭喜 <i>gong xi</i> (<i>to congratulate</i>)	不敢当 <i>bu gan dang</i> (<i>I don't deserve it</i>) *used by speaker after being praised/elevated by others
奉 <i>feng</i> (<i>with respect</i>) Ex: 奉还 <i>feng huan</i> (<i>respectfully return</i>), 奉劝 <i>feng quan</i> (<i>may I venture to advise you to</i>), 奉送 <i>feng song</i> (<i>to give away as a gift</i>)	
拜 <i>bai</i> (<i>to do obeisance; to bow</i>) Ex: 拜访 <i>bai fang</i> (<i>to visit</i>), 拜托 <i>bai tuo</i> (<i>to entrust</i>), 拜读 <i>bai du</i> (<i>to read with respect</i>)	

Table 2. Honorifics used in contemporary Chinese

CONCLUSION

The way we speak is a large part of how we interact with and present ourselves to the world. Our speech can portray us or betray us. As Jesus said in Luke 6:45, “The good person from the abundance of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaks” (*The Holy Bible*, Luke 6.45). The words we choose are intimately related to who we are or who we want to become. From the moment we open our mouths, we begin a negotiation process with our conversation partner. It begins at the beginning, when we address someone. Questions like “Who should initiate the conversation”, “Who should say whose names first”, and “How should I address my speech partner” are inevitable in day-to-day communications. In order to have a successful negotiation process, there must be some mutual understanding of what is and what is not appropriate. Politeness provides the basis and foundation for this. It facilitates mutual understanding between two speech partners.

In this thesis, I have shown that politeness strategies originate from philosophy, which is tied intimately to culture. In the instance of Chinese politeness, an understanding of the thoughts and teachings of Confucius is necessary to put the politeness strategies into context. Because of this, I have set Confucius and his main teachings regarding the family and the rites as a backdrop to the study of kinship terminologies and honorifics. Beyond discussing the connection between politeness and philosophy, I have also shown the importance of placing politeness within its historical context. Specifically, I focused on how the usage of kinship terminologies and the role of the Chinese family have

evolved with major political events such as the Communist Revolution. I also discussed how the usage of honorifics has survived the major ideological transitions such as the May Fourth Movement and the Cultural Revolution. Because I focused on verbal instead of written communications, the examples I provided of how kinship terminologies and honorifics were used from imperial to contemporary times came from spoken dialogues of prominent Chinese television shows and movies.

Due to the breadth of my topic, I did not provide an exhaustive list of every way kinship terminologies and honorifics have been used. Instead, I focused on the larger trends of usage that were specific to each major time period. One potential limitation of my study is that the dialogues I used as examples are scripted, as they come from movies and television programs. There is a risk that scripted dialogues can only portray a more textbook, idealized version of what actual speech looks like. On the other hand, scripted dialogue seeks to emulate key features of speech and can therefore capture and amplify the essence of trends in speech in a concise manner. It can also provide a look into earlier time periods, such as that of imperial China, when collecting recorded data of naturally occurring dialogue would be impossible.

To expand this study in the future, I could add examples of natural, recorded dialogue. While this type of data would be difficult or impossible to obtain from the earlier time periods, it could be possible for the contemporary period through interviews. The addition of interviews to this study would further enrich it. To add another dimension to this study, I also could include more examples from social media platforms. A deeper study of how politeness is used on Chinese social media platforms would provide a more comprehensive view of Chinese politeness in the contemporary world, since so much

informal communication now happens on social media platforms. This is an area I would like to explore in the future.

I recognize that with this thesis, I have merely dipped a toe into the broad pool of Chinese politeness. There is still much left to be said on this topic, since this topic is not stagnant. As long as Chinese society continues to progress, Chinese politeness will evolve alongside it. While it is uncertain what Chinese culture and politeness will look like in the future, time has only shown the resilience of Chinese thought. From my research, it seems that the usages of kinship terminologies and honorifics are here to stay, as they are lodged firmly within the bedrock of Chinese culture and thought.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Antony, Robert J. "First Opium War 1839-1842." *Encyclopedia of Chinese-American Relations*, edited by Yuwu Song, McFarland, 1st edition, 2009. *Credo Reference*, http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/mcfcham/first_opium_war_1839_1842/0?institutionId=720. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.
- Brown, Brian. *The Story of Confucius: His Life and Sayings*. David McKay Company, 1927.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 61–78.
- Chen, Feng, et al. "Does the Use of Honorific Appellations in Audit Reports Connote Higher Financial Misstatement Risk? Evidence from China." *Asian Review of Accounting*, Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018.
- Chen, Xinren. "'Family-Culture' and Chinese Politeness." *Acta Linguistica Academia*, vol. 66, no. 2, 3 June 2019, pp. 251–270.
- Chin, Annping. *The Authentic Confucius: A Life of Thought and Politics*. Scribner, 2007.
- Cline, Erin M. *The Boundaries of Manners: Ritual and Etiquette in Early Confucianism and Stohr's On Manners*. Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht, 29 Mar. 2016.
- Confucius. *The Analects*. Translated by D. C. Lau, Penguin Group, 1979.
- "Confucius, China's Greatest Teacher of All the Ages." *The Chinese Mind*, by Gung-Hsing Wang, Asia Press, 1946, pp. 11–28.

- Creel, H.G. *Confucius and the Chinese Way*. Harper & Brothers, 1960.
- Diamant, Neil. "Re-Examining the Impact of the 1950 Marriage Law: State Improvisation, Local Initiative and Rural Family Change." *The China Quarterly*, no. No. 161, Cambridge University Press on behalf of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Mar. 2000, pp. 171–98.
- Dizon, Sheena. "30+ Must-Know Chinese Honorifics for Being Polite Like a Pro." *FluentU*. Accessed 10 Jan. 2021.
- Dream of the Red Chamber*. Directed by Wang Fulin, performances by Ouyang Fenqiang, Chen Xiaoxu, Zhang Li, Deng Jie, China Central Television, 1987.
- Fang, Hanquan, and J. H. Heng. "Social Changes and Changing Address Norms in China." *Language in Society*, Cambridge University Press, Dec. 1983.
- Fengyuan, Ji. "Language and Violence During the Chinese Cultural Revolution." *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, American Association of Chinese Studies, Oct. 2004.
- Freedman, Maurice. "The Family in China, Past and Present." *Pacific Affairs*, Pacific Affairs, University of British Columbia, 1962, pp. 323–36.
- Goh, Alexis P. I., and Peirchyi Lii. "Examining Leader–Follower Interactions through the Lens of Chinese Politeness." *CHINA REPORT*, SAGE Publications, Mar. 2017.
- Gu, Yueguo. "Politeness Phenomena in Modern Chinese." *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 14, 1990, pp. 237–257.
- Hagen, Kurtis. "The Propriety of Confucius: A Sense-of-Ritual." *Asian Philosophy*, vol. 20, no. No. 1, Mar. 2010, pp. 1–25.
- Helle, Horst J. "China: the Kinship Society." *China: Promise or Threat*, Brill, 2016, pp. 123–137.
- Hellström Inger. "The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution: Aspects of the Changes Brought about by the Communist Government." *Acta Sociologica*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1962, pp. 259–277., www.jstor.com/stable/4193564.
- Hinze, Carl G. "Chinese Politeness Is Not about 'Face': Evidence from the Business World." *Journal of Politeness Research*, vol. 8, 2012, pp. 11–27.
- Ho, Fefe. "Chinese New Year Gala." *Chinese New Year*. Accessed 13 Feb. 2021.
- Hsia, Tao-Tai. "The Language Revolution in Communist China." *Far Eastern Survey*, Institute of Pacific Relations, Oct. 1956.

- Lee, Horng-Yi. "Linguistic Politeness in the Chinese Language and Culture." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Academy Publication Co., LTD, Jan. 2020.
- Leese, Daniel. *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in the Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Li Youyuan, "The East Is Red".
- "Linguistic determinism, linguistic relativity." *A Dictionary of Sociolinguistics*, Joan Swann, et al., Edinburgh University Press, 1st edition, 2004. *Credo Reference*, http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/edinburghds/linguistic_determinism_linguistic_relativity/0?institutionId=720. Accessed 08 Oct. 2020.
- Lu, Aitao, et al. "Looking Up to Others: Social Status, Chinese Honorifics, and Spatial Attention." *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Canadian Psychological Association, 2014.
- Mao's Last Dancer*. Directed by Bruce Beresford, performances by Chi Cao, Bruce Greenwood, Kyle MacLachlan, Great Scott Productions Pty. Ltd., 2009.
- Pan, Yuling, and Kádár Dániel Z. "Historical vs. Contemporary Chinese Linguistic Politeness." *Journal of Pragmatics*, Mar. 2010.
- Pan, Yuling, and Kádár Dániel Z. *Politeness in Historical and Contemporary Chinese*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.
- Qian, Yufang, and Scott Songlin Piao. "Chinese Kinship Semantic Structure and Annotation Scheme." 2007.
- Qiao Ping, "Sing a Folk Song for the Communist Party." 1963.
- Raise the Red Lantern*. Directed by Zhang Yimou, performances by Gong Li, Jingwu Ma, Saifei He, ERA International, 1991.
- St. André James. "How the Chinese Lost 'Face.'" *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 55, 2013, pp. 68–85.
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Kinship Terminology." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 21 June 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/kinship-terminology.
- The Grand Mansion Gate*. Directed by Guo Bao Chang, performances by Baoguo Chen, Saifei He, Peiqi Liu, Chinese Television Production Center, 2001.

The Herdsman. Directed by Xie Jin and Shuqin Huang, performances by Qiang Liu, Shimao Zhu, Shan Cong, Ningxia Film Group, 1982.

The Holy Bible. English Standard Version, Crossway, 2001.

Tse-tsung, Chow. *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*. Stanford University Press, 1960.

World Heritage Encyclopedia. "Chinese Honorifics." *World Heritage Encyclopedia*. Accessed 10 Jan. 2021.

Wu, Haiyan, et al. "Language Modulates Brain Activity Underlying Representation of Kinship Terms." *Nature*, Sci. Rep, Dec. 2015.

Xiao, Jiefu, and Jinquan Li. *A Concise History of Chinese Philosophy: Main Currents of Thought from Myth to Mao*. Long River Pres, 2012, p. 523.

Zhan, Kaidi. *The Strategies of Politeness in the Chinese Language*. The Regents of the University of California, 1992.

Zhou, Ling, and Dániel Z. Kádár. "Self-Denigration in 21st Century Chinese." *Journal of Politeness Research*, De Gruyter, 2020.

2020 Spring Festival Gala. China Central Television, 2020.