

**Exploring the Intersection of Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication in Moussa Konaté's *La Malédiction du Lamantin***

**L'intersection entre la pragmatique et la communication interculturelle dans le roman "*La Malédiction du Lamantin*" de Moussa Konaté**

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**Abstract:**

This paper examines the intersection of pragmatics and intercultural communication by analyzing Moussa Konaté's novel, "La Malédiction du Lamantin." The study delves into how cultural contexts influence language usage and communication strategies, underlining the pivotal role of cultural norms in effective communication. Konaté's narrative provides a rich case study that manifests the tension between traditional African beliefs and modern investigative approaches, unveiling the intricacies and challenges inherent in intercultural communication. Through a meticulous analysis of speech acts, politeness

strategies, and instances of pragmatic failure within the novel, the paper underscores the necessity of cultural competence and adaptability. These elements are crucial in mitigating misunderstandings and fostering mutual understanding across different cultural landscapes. By situating the narrative within a complex framework of cultural conflict and communication hurdles, the paper offers profound insights into the dynamics of intercultural interactions. The conclusion discusses broader implications for the field of pragmatics and intercultural communication, suggesting future research directions, particularly within the context of African literature. This analysis not only contributes to academic discourse but also provides practical implications for enhancing communication across diverse cultural settings.

**Keywords:**

Pragmatics, Intercultural Communication, Cultural Norms, African Literature, Cultural Competence

**Résumé**

Cet article examine l'intersection entre la pragmatique et la communication interculturelle à travers l'analyse du roman "La Malédiction du Lamantin" de Moussa Konaté. L'étude explore comment les contextes culturels influencent l'utilisation de la langue et les stratégies de communication, soulignant le rôle crucial des normes culturelles dans une communication efficace. Le récit de Konaté offre une étude de cas riche qui manifeste la tension entre les croyances

traditionnelles africaines et les approches modernes d'enquête, révélant ainsi les complexités et les défis inhérents à la communication interculturelle. À travers une analyse minutieuse des actes de parole, des stratégies de politesse et des instances d'échec pragmatique dans le roman, l'article souligne la nécessité de la compétence culturelle et de l'adaptabilité. Ces éléments sont essentiels pour atténuer les malentendus et favoriser une compréhension mutuelle à travers différents paysages culturels. En situant le récit dans un cadre complexe de conflit culturel et d'obstacles à la communication, l'article offre des insights profonds sur les dynamiques des interactions interculturelles. La conclusion discute des implications plus larges pour le domaine de la pragmatique et de la communication interculturelle, suggérant des directions futures pour la recherche, en particulier dans le contexte de la littérature africaine. Cette analyse contribue non seulement au discours académique mais offre également des implications pratiques pour améliorer la communication à travers divers contextes culturels.

**Mots-clés:** Pragmatique, Communication interculturelle, Normes culturelles, Littérature africaine, Compétence culturelle

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Purpose and Scope

Several African works have captured the spirit of African culture, showcasing its abundance, problems, and successes. We frequently discuss the

abundance of African literature since it reflects the growth of African culture from one era to the next, as well as the features of each age. African literature has grown in popularity throughout the years, owing to writers of African descent from various eras. In each of these eras, these writers explore different approaches and themes. When discussing the topics explored in numerous African books, we may describe them as colonization, slavery, modernization, and traditional religion. Take colonialism as an example. The colonial period had a big influence on Africa. The Western school was introduced during colonization, and this unusual manner of learning has prompted many Africans to rethink major aspects of their culture, notably their trust in supernatural forces. There are many Africans who believe in mystical abilities and those who do not. We frequently encounter conflicts between the two sides. This point of dispute is being investigated in this study. We will utilize an African work to thematically investigate this debate and other relevant mystic concerns.

Examining the interplay between pragmatics and intercultural communication is crucial for understanding how language functions within various cultural contexts. Pragmatics, the branch of linguistics that studies how context influences meaning, provides vital insights into the implicit rules and conventions that govern language use. Intercultural communication, which explores the exchange of information between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, emphasizes the role of cultural norms, values, and practices in shaping communicative behavior. Investigating these fields together offers a

comprehensive understanding of how cultural differences affect language use, facilitating the development of more effective communication strategies.

Moussa Konaté's novel *La Malédiction du Lamantin* serves as an exemplary case study for exploring these themes. The novel, set in Mali, portrays the tension between traditional African beliefs and modern influences, providing a nuanced depiction of communication within a multicultural society. Moussa Konaté's Mali remains a country deeply dependent on its age-old customs and beliefs, which may even be observed among those who have received a Western and modernized education. (Sow, 2010) Through its narrative, Konaté highlights the complexities of language use and the impact of cultural contexts on communication strategies. This study will utilize the interactions and cultural conflicts depicted in the novel to illustrate the pragmatic challenges inherent in intercultural communication.

## 1.2. Thesis Statement

This paper posits that cultural contexts significantly shape language use and communication strategies, as demonstrated by the interactions and conflicts in Moussa Konaté's *La Malédiction du Lamantin*. The novel exemplifies broader issues in intercultural communication, underscoring the necessity of understanding and adapting to cultural norms and practices to achieve effective communication. Through a detailed thematic analysis of the novel, this study aims to elucidate the pragmatic successes and failures that occur in intercultural

interactions, thereby providing insights into the development of intercultural pragmatic competence (Konaté, 2009).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. About the writer

Moussa Konaté is a significant figure in contemporary Malian literature, having graduated in literature from the École Normale Supérieure of Bamako. He published his debut novel in 1981 and has since written a diverse body of work, including novels, short stories, plays, essays, and tales. He founded Éditions Le Figuier, an initiative aimed at promoting knowledge in rural communities through publications in Mali's national languages. His notable works reflect his deep engagement with themes pertinent to African identity and societal challenges. As co-director of the Etonnants Voyageurs festival in Bamako, he plays a crucial role in showcasing and promoting the literary arts of his country. He has created the character of Commissioner Habib, a Malian investigator navigating the complex interplay between traditional African and Western cultures. His contributions have made significant contributions to literacy and education in these areas. Arthème Fayard (2019) regards him as the best literary representative of his country, Mali.

## 2.2. About the Novel

As stated by Gallet (2013), he is introducing us to a fourth book and the continuation of the adventures of two Malian cops, Commissioner Habib, and Inspector Sosso. Moussa Konaté's *La Malédiction du Lamantin* explores the cultural dynamics and mystical beliefs in Mali through a police novel featuring Commissioners Habib and Sosso investigating mysterious deaths in a Bozo village. The narrative highlights the clash between indigenous beliefs in the water deity Maa and modern law enforcement, reflecting broader societal challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. Maa in this case can be referred to as a myth and Traditional African religion is expressed in everyday life through symbols, gestures, objects, rites, ceremonies, and myths. (Mwanza, 2006)

The story examines the tension between tradition and modernity, as Habib grapples with ancestral expectations and loyalty to his homeland. The investigation uncovers past transgressions, including the theft of a sacred totem by a colonial administrator, complicating the pursuit of justice. The novel emphasizes the cultural ethos of respect for tradition while navigating the urgency of justice, as Habib and Sosso face mounting pressure from their community and their moral dilemmas. Konaté's narrative weaves together themes of cultural identity, colonial history, and the quest for justice, leaving readers with a deeper understanding of the complexities that shape African societies. The author does an excellent job of describing the city, particularly the Bozo ethnicity, which is a mix of animism and Islam and lives in a contemporary world without losing its beliefs. (Claude, 2009.)

### 2.3. Pragmatics and Culture

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that examines how context influences the interpretation of meaning in language. It encompasses various aspects such as speech acts, implicature, deixis, and conversational structure, which are essential for understanding how meaning is constructed in specific situations (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatics is particularly relevant for comprehending language in context because it considers the speaker's intentions, the relationship between interlocutors, and the situational context in which communication occurs. This relevance is underscored by the fact that pragmatic rules often vary significantly across different cultures, affecting how messages are interpreted and understood.

Cross-cultural pragmatics extends this study by exploring how these pragmatic rules and norms differ between cultures. It investigates how cultural contexts influence the use and interpretation of language, providing insights into the ways people from different cultural backgrounds understand and produce speech acts (Wierzbicka, 1991). This field is significant for studying intercultural communication as it helps identify potential areas of misunderstanding and conflict that arise from differing cultural norms and practices.

### 2.4. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is the process of exchanging information between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It encompasses verbal and non-verbal communication, cultural norms, and the impact of cultural

differences on communication practices. Key areas of study within intercultural communication include cultural dimensions, communication styles, and the development of intercultural competence (Gudykunst& Kim, 2003).

The importance of cultural norms in intercultural communication cannot be overstated. Cultural norms dictate acceptable behaviors, communication styles, and social practices, which are essential for effective interaction. Non-verbal communication, including gestures, facial expressions, and body language, plays a critical role in conveying meaning and can vary widely between cultures (Hall, 1976). Intercultural competence, the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, involves understanding and respecting these cultural differences, adapting communication styles, and developing empathy and openness towards other cultures (Deardorff, 2006).

### **2.5. African Literature and Cultural Context**

African literature plays a crucial role in portraying the richness and complexity of African cultural beliefs and practices. It serves as a medium for expressing the historical, social, and political realities of African societies, highlighting the interplay between tradition and modernity. Through literature, African writers explore themes such as colonization, slavery, cultural identity, and the clash between traditional and modern values (Achebe, 1987).

In the intricate tapestry of cultural narratives, the characters of Keita and Sosso find themselves ensnared in a web of legend, tradition, and the weight of

ancestral respect. They are thrust into the harsh reality of a murder cloaked in secrecy, one that the community attempts to obscure under the guise of an ancient curse associated with the Lamantin, a mystical spirit deeply intertwined with the fate of the people. However, this mystical spirit could naturally be a large, peaceful aquatic mammal that is highly endangered due to human activities, particularly boat propellers. (Wooz, 2021)

The Lamantin is emblematic of loss and suffering, representing a guardian whose daughter has been grievously harmed. This narrative serves as a poignant reflection of the multifaceted identities of Malians, who oscillate between mysticism and tangible reality, as well as between their African heritage and Western influences. Central to this discourse is the figure of Maa, the river deity that embodies the essence of the Lamantin. The Bozo people hold a profound belief in Maa's power, viewing him as a crucial conduit for divine intervention within their community. In times of distress or uncertainty, it is to Maa that the populace turns, offering sacrifices in the hope of divine insight into their current predicaments or future outcomes. This dynamic interplay of belief, tradition, and the quest for understanding underscores the enduring relevance of cultural narratives in shaping the collective consciousness of a community, highlighting the ongoing dialogue between the spiritual and the corporeal realms. Such themes are not merely relics of the past but remain vital in contemporary discourse, illustrating how ancient traditions continue to inform and influence modern societal values and experiences:

Maa, où que tu sois, voici l'offrande que nous te destinons. Le savon efface la tâche, le médicament guérit la plaie, la pluie lave les nuages, mais seule l'humilité de l'offenseur guérit la douleur de l'offensé. (Konaté, 15)

Maa, wherever you are, this is the offering we have for you. Soap erases the stain, medicine heals the wound, and rain washes away the clouds, but only the humility of the offender heals the pain of the offended. (Konaté, 15)

Despite being a detective novel set in Africa, it becomes evident that the narrative serves as an exploration of some of the mystical forces that are revered across the continent. In this context, the figure of Maa, the Manatee, emerges as a significant symbol. Thus, the novel acts as an intrusion into the customs and beliefs intrinsic to African cultures. This representation of mystical power is notably compelling; it possesses the ability to reject offerings made by the characters, thereby highlighting the complex interplay between the spiritual and the material in African tradition. Through this lens, the novel invites readers to reflect on the deep-seated cultural significance of these mystical elements and their impact on the lives of individuals within the narrative:

Ha! Maa a refusé notre offrande!, se désola le devin tandis que ses compagnons demeuraient figés de stupeur. (Konaté, 16)

Ha! Maa refused our offering!, the soothsayer lamented while his companions remained frozen in astonishment. (Konaté, 16)

Moussa Konaté is a significant figure in African literature, known for his contributions to the genre through his exploration of modernity and tradition. His works, including *La Malédiction du Lamantin*, address the tensions between traditional African beliefs and contemporary influences, providing a nuanced perspective on the cultural dynamics within African societies. Konaté's narratives often focus on the impact of colonialism, the persistence of traditional beliefs, and the complexities of navigating between different cultural paradigms (Konaté, 20-25). His portrayal of these themes offers valuable insights into the ways cultural contexts shape communication and social interactions in African settings.

## 2.6. Methodological Approach

In this research, two explicit methodological approaches are applied such as qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. Knowing that our work is a case study, these two approaches will enrich the textual analysis carried out in this study. Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are both research methodologies that enrich our case study, but they differ in their emphasis, approach, and interpretation of the book. This improves our capacity to discuss the book from multiple analytical perspectives. QCA directs our attention to the book's substance or message, whereas TA reveals people's experiences, viewpoints, and perspectives. More so, it creates room to further analyze some of the pertinent themes in the book, explore some main characters, make interdisciplinary

comparisons between linguistic and cultural tendencies, empirical and traditional methods, and contribute generally to the issue of traditional mysticism and beliefs within the African system. The premises of the textual interpretation of the book touch on the difference between empirical and traditional methods of investigation, hence we are not relying on thematic analysis only.

### 3. Thematic Analysis of *La Malédiction du Lamantin*

#### 3.1. Cultural Beliefs and Communication

Moussa Konaté's *La Malédiction du Lamantin* vividly portrays traditional African beliefs, highlighting their significance within the Bozo community. The reverence for Maa, the river deity, is a central theme that underscores the community's reliance on spiritual explanations for natural events and societal issues. This reverence is depicted through various rituals and offerings to Maa, which reflect the deep-seated belief in the deity's power to influence their lives (Konaté, 18-20).

The arrival and departure of colonial masters have profoundly influenced the African continent. This phenomenon has resulted in both positive and negative impacts on the societies present in Africa. Despite the substantial effects of colonial regimes, Black Africans have consistently maintained a place of honor for their diverse deities. This aspect truly encapsulates the essence of Africa—where respect for elders, animistic beliefs, and a certain nonchalance coexist

harmoniously. For instance, when a respected elder, referred to as Maa, speaks, their words carry immense weight and finality, reflecting the cultural reverence bestowed upon them. Furthermore, no one pressures Maa to voice their thoughts, illustrating the deep-rooted respect for authority and tradition that permeates African culture:

Maa ne veut décidément rien entendre. Il refuse à présent de me répondre. Il n'y a donc plus rien à faire que d'attendre notre mort. (Konaté, 18)

Maa doesn't want to hear anything. It now refuses to answer me. So there is nothing left to do but wait for our death. (Konaté, 18)

Despite the formal education of police officers, a legacy of colonial rule, Commissioner Habib often finds it difficult to comprehend the confessions of Keita, the only daughter of Nassoumba. This situation presents a profound mystery. Understanding this mystical power proves to be a challenging endeavor. Nevertheless, one cannot help but be "enchanted" by the atmosphere that envelops the narrative. Consequently, the novel unfolds as an investigation devoid of significant suspense, yet it is characterized by beautiful prose that reveals an Africa that remains largely incomprehensible to outsiders. The commissioner's confusion is poignantly captured in the book. This reflection not only underscores the cultural disconnect but also invites readers to look deeper into the complexities of identity and understanding in a postcolonial context. Through the lens of Habib's bewilderment, the narrative challenges preconceived notions and

emphasizes the richness of African experiences, inviting a broader discourse on the interplay between colonial legacies and contemporary realities:

Certes, le commissaire avait eu l'intuition que l'explication du meurtre de Nassoumba se trouvait dans cette chambre, mais il devait reconnaître qu'il n'avait aucunement prévu la tournure qu'avait prise l'interrogatoire. L'air grave, il regardait Kaïra qui étrangement, souriait.

(Konaté, 178)

Certainly, the commissioner had had the intuition that the explanation for Nassoumba's murder was to be found in this room, but he had to recognize that he had in no way anticipated the turn that the interrogation had taken. Looking serious, he looked at Kaïra who, strangely, was smiling. (Konaté, 178)

The novel explores the tension between these traditional beliefs and the rational, evidence-based approach of the police investigation. The Bozo people's unwavering faith in Maa's influence stands in stark contrast to the police officers' reliance on empirical evidence and logical reasoning. This dichotomy creates a cultural clash, as the police attempt to impose a modern investigative framework on a community rooted in ancient spiritual practices. The officers' struggle to reconcile these differing worldviews illustrates the broader conflict between tradition and modernity in African societies.

### 3.2. Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies

The novel demonstrates how cultural norms shape communication styles through the use of speech acts and politeness strategies. The Bozo elders frequently employ indirect speech and proverbs, which are integral to their high-context communication style. These forms of expression convey meanings that extend beyond the literal interpretation of words, relying heavily on shared cultural knowledge and context.

In contrast, the police officers use direct speech, characteristic of low-context communication typical of Western cultures. This directness, intended to convey unambiguous information, often clashes with the Bozo elders' preference for subtlety and indirection. The elders' use of proverbs serves as a means to maintain politeness and respect, while also allowing for the transmission of wisdom and cultural values. This difference in communication styles highlights the cultural norms that govern interaction within the Bozo community and the challenges faced by the police in navigating these norms.

### 3.3. Miscommunication and Pragmatic Failure

Instances of miscommunication and pragmatic failure are prevalent in *La Malédiction du Lamantin*, often stemming from cultural differences. One notable example is the police's misunderstanding of the Bozo elders' indirect speech and proverbs. The officers' inability to grasp the implicit meanings and cultural references leads to significant communication breakdowns. These failures are

compounded by the officers' insistence on direct questioning, which the elders perceive as disrespectful and intrusive (Konaté, 2009).

The consequences of these misunderstandings are profound, affecting both the characters and the plot. Miscommunication exacerbates the tension between the police and the Bozo community, hindering the investigation and fostering distrust. The officers' pragmatic failures highlight the necessity of cultural competence and adaptability in intercultural interactions. By failing to recognize and respect Bozo's communicative norms, the police inadvertently undermine their efforts to solve the case, illustrating the critical role of cultural awareness in effective communication (Konaté, 2009).

#### **4. Pragmatic Competence in Intercultural Contexts**

##### **4.1. Developing Intercultural Pragmatic Competence**

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various social contexts. This includes understanding the social rules and conventions that govern language use, recognizing implicit meanings, and adjusting speech according to the interlocutor's cultural background. In intercultural communication, pragmatic competence is essential as it enables individuals to navigate different cultural norms and avoid misunderstandings that arise from divergent communicative practices (Levinson, 1983).

Strategies for developing intercultural pragmatic competence are vital for effective communication across cultures. Cultural awareness training involves educating individuals about different cultural norms, values, and communication styles. This training helps individuals understand the cultural context of their interlocutors, reducing the likelihood of pragmatic failures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Pragmatic instruction focuses on teaching language learners about speech acts, politeness strategies, and context-specific language use, which are crucial for interacting appropriately in different cultural settings (Wierzbicka, 1991). Experiential learning, such as immersion programs and intercultural exchanges, provides practical experience in diverse cultural environments, allowing individuals to apply their knowledge and develop adaptive communication skills (Deardorff, 2006).

#### **4.2. Strategies for Enhancing Intercultural Communication**

Improving intercultural communication skills requires practical strategies that emphasize understanding and adaptation to cultural differences. Empathy plays a critical role in intercultural communication, as it involves putting oneself in the other person's shoes and understanding their perspective. This empathetic approach helps in bridging cultural gaps and fostering mutual respect (Hall, 1976).

Cultural sensitivity involves being aware of and respectful of the cultural differences of others. This sensitivity can be enhanced through continuous learning and exposure to diverse cultures, which helps in recognizing and

appreciating the nuances of different communicative practices (Gudykunst& Kim, 2003). Adaptability is also crucial, as it involves adjusting one's communication style to align with the cultural norms of the interlocutor. This flexibility can significantly improve the effectiveness of communication in intercultural settings.

Practical recommendations for enhancing intercultural communication skills include:

1. Engaging in active listening to fully understand the speaker's message and the cultural context in which it is delivered.
2. Seeking feedback from individuals from different cultural backgrounds to improve communication strategies.
3. Participating in cultural exchange programs to gain firsthand experience and insights into different cultural practices.
4. Practicing patience and openness in interactions, recognizing that misunderstandings are part of the learning process and can be resolved through dialogue and mutual effort.

## 5. Case Study: Communication Strategies in *La Malédiction du Lamantin*

### 5.1. Narrative Techniques and Cultural Representation

Moussa Konaté employs a variety of narrative techniques in *La Malédiction du Lamantin* to effectively convey cultural beliefs and practices. The use of detailed

descriptions and dialogues serves to immerse readers in the traditional world of the Bozo people, highlighting their rituals, customs, and spiritual beliefs. Konaté's storytelling is interwoven with cultural symbolism, such as the reverence for Maa, the river deity, which plays a central role in the lives of the characters.

In the narrative, the influence of Western education on the investigative methods of Commissioner Habib and his assistant, Inspector Sosso, is prominently displayed through dialogues. Their approach to solving the mysterious deaths within the story reflects a blend of traditional beliefs and modern investigative techniques. Commissioner Habib's primary objective is to substantiate that the deaths of the chief and his co-wife were merely the result of natural causes. This determination illustrates the tension between local customs and the analytical frameworks introduced through Western education. Notably, Habib's search for the key to Djaaba's room, a co-wife of Kouata whom he suspects of foul play, further exemplifies his reliance on systematic inquiry rather than traditional assumptions. This dynamic dialogue not only serves to advance the plot but also critiques the cultural shifts occurring within the society depicted in the novel:

- Ce n'est pas vous qui m'intéressez, lui expliqua-t-il, mais Djaaba.  
Qui garde la clé de sa chambre? (Konaté, 164)
- It's not you who interests me, he explained, but Djaaba. Who  
keeps their room key? (Konate, 164)

The novel's structure reflects the coexistence of different cultural paradigms by juxtaposing traditional African beliefs with modern investigative techniques. Most importantly, there is no mention of God Almighty (The Western Deity), as the main focus of the Police officers is a scientific investigation. In all African religious practices, humanity is never confused with God or governing powers. The most evident signs of these relationships are transactions and belongings. After these manifestations, the human being returns to itself. There is no misunderstanding between God, the heavenly powers, and human beings. It has a transcendent quality. (Magloire, 2020). The narrative shifts between the perspectives of the Bozo villagers, who interpret events through the lens of their cultural and spiritual beliefs, and the police officers, who approach the investigation with a rational, evidence-based mindset. This dual perspective underscores the cultural tensions and highlights the complexity of navigating multiple worldviews within a single narrative framework.

## 5.2. Character Interactions and Pragmatic Nuances

The interactions between characters from different cultural backgrounds in *La Malédiction du Lamantin* reveal significant pragmatic nuances. The Bozo elders, for instance, use indirect speech and proverbs to communicate, which reflects their high-context communication style. These forms of expression rely on shared cultural knowledge and implicit understanding, making them difficult for outsiders to interpret accurately (Konaté, 2009).

In contrast, the police officers employ a straightforward communication style, characteristic of low-context cultures. This directness often leads to misunderstandings and conflicts, as the officers' attempts to obtain clear and concise information clash with the elders' more nuanced and indirect way of conveying meaning. These pragmatic nuances underscore the importance of cultural competence in interpreting and responding to different communication styles (Konaté, 2009).

### 5.3. Implications for Intercultural Communication

The broader implications of *La Malédiction du Lamantin* for intercultural communication are significant. The novel illustrates how cultural misunderstandings and pragmatic failures can hinder effective communication and exacerbate conflicts. The police officer's inability to appreciate and adapt to the Bozo community's communicative norms leads to frustration and mistrust, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity and adaptability in intercultural interactions.

In the narrative, Habib and Sosso grapple with the challenge of reconciling their police training with the beliefs of the local Bozo community. (Orsenna, 2022) Commissioner Habib is inclined to attribute the deaths he investigates to natural causes, while the Bozos contend that these fatalities are steeped in mysticism, wherein all villagers fall under the influence of Maa, the revered manatee. This dichotomy is rooted in a legend that has emerged from a real historical incident

during the colonial era. The Bozo community firmly believes that the demise of their tribal chief, Kouata, along with that of his formidable second wife, Nassoumba, is the consequence of a divine curse and cannot be subjected to police inquiry. This situation presents a formidable challenge for Habib, whose pragmatic mindset clashes with the rich tapestry of myths and cultural beliefs intrinsic to the community he serves. As Habib and his loyal assistant, Sosso, investigate the complexities of this case, they must navigate the delicate interplay between tradition and modern law enforcement, all while addressing the deep-seated anger of a people whose customs have been repeatedly threatened. This exploration not only highlights the tension between different belief systems but also underscores the need for cultural sensitivity within the realm of policing:

- Eh oui Sosso, c'est comme ça. D'un côté, ils soutiennent que c'est Allah qui a foudroyé le chef Kouata et son épouse, de l'autre ils présentent leurs excuses à Maa le Lamantin, une divinité des eaux... Je m'appelle SadjèKouata. Mon père était le chef des Bozos de Kokri. Ma mère s'appelait Nansa, mais elle n'est plus de ce monde. (Konaté, 32)

- Yes, Sosso, that's how it is. On the one hand, they maintain that it was Allah who struck down Chief Kouata and his wife, on the other they apologize to Maa the Manatee, a water divinity... My name is SadjèKouata. My father was the leader of the Bozos of Kokri. My mother's name was Nansa, but she is no longer in this world. (Konaté, 32)

Emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability, the novel demonstrates that understanding and respecting cultural differences is crucial for reducing misunderstandings and fostering mutual understanding. The characters' experiences in the novel serve as a reminder that effective intercultural communication requires not only linguistic competence but also an awareness of and respect for the cultural contexts in which communication occurs. This awareness can significantly enhance the ability to navigate and resolve conflicts in multicultural settings (Konaté, 2021).

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Summary of Key Points

This paper has explored the intricate interplay between pragmatics and intercultural communication, using Moussa Konaté's *La Malédiction du Lamantin* as a focal point. The analysis revealed how cultural contexts significantly shape language use and communication strategies. The novel's portrayal of traditional African beliefs and the tension between these beliefs and modern investigative methods highlighted the complexities inherent in intercultural communication. Through the detailed examination of speech acts, politeness strategies, and instances of pragmatic failure, the study demonstrated the critical role of cultural norms and context in effective communication.

## 6.2. Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study have important implications for the fields of pragmatics and intercultural communication. They underscore the necessity of understanding and respecting cultural differences to enhance communication effectiveness and reduce misunderstandings. The analysis of *La Malédiction du Lamantin* illustrates the potential for miscommunication when interlocutors do not share the same cultural background, emphasizing the need for intercultural competence and adaptability (Konaté, 2009).

Future research should continue to explore the rich insights provided by African literature, particularly concerning intercultural communication. Investigating other works by African authors can further illuminate the diverse ways in which cultural contexts influence communication. Additionally, research could expand to include empirical studies that examine how pragmatic competence is developed and applied in real-world intercultural interactions. Such studies could provide valuable data on the effectiveness of various strategies for enhancing intercultural communication skills and inform the development of more targeted training programs.

By extending the scope of research to encompass a broader range of cultural contexts and communicative practices, scholars can deepen our understanding of the complex dynamics that underpin intercultural communication. This knowledge

is essential for fostering more inclusive and effective communication in an increasingly globalized world.

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