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TOPICS AND FORMS OF ADDRESS OF THE HIGHER–LOWER ROLE PAIR IN THE COMMUNICATION OF THE WHITE PANTS DAO PEOPLE IN PHUC AN COMMUNE, YEN BINH DISTRICT, YEN BAI PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to clarify the characteristics of address and communication topics related to the higher–lower role pair among the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province. The goal is to analyze address as a linguistic element that reflects social structure, morality, and community relationships in White Pants Dao culture. The study identifies clear principles of address based on age, kinship, and social roles within both the family and the community. Accordingly, the system of address is shown not only as a tool for communication but also as a reflection of respect, hierarchy, and the awareness of preserving traditional values. The communication situations examined include festivals, community gatherings, and family interactions. The research findings indicate that address between higher and lower roles plays a crucial role in maintaining social order and preserving cultural traditions among the White Pants Dao. Moreover, the appropriate use of address terms also serves as a testament to the intergenerational bonds and is a profound expression of moral values in the ethnic culture.

KEYWORDS: Topic, address, role pair, White Pants Dao people, Yen Bai.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a means of communication but also a reflection of social relationships, cultural values, and community characteristics. Within the White Pants Dao community in Phuc An Commune (Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province), language plays a vital role in daily life and in preserving traditional cultural identity. One prominent feature is the distinction between "higher roles" and "lower roles" in communication.

The "higher role" usually refers to older individuals, those with greater prestige or higher social status, while the "lower role" denotes younger people or those in subordinate positions within the family or community. This distinction is clearly expressed through forms of address, speech patterns, and respectful communicative behavior. Language becomes a tool to convey values such as filial piety, respect for elders, and the maintenance of traditional social order.

The use of role-differentiated address terms reflects a complex system of social values and intergenerational relationships. Studying this linguistic feature not only deepens our understanding of how language mirrors social structures but also contributes to the preservation of the unique cultural heritage of the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An.

2. CONTENT

2.1. Linguistic features of the higher–lower role pair in informal communication among the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province

2.1.1. Communication topics of the higher–lower role pair in formal communication among the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province

Communication is an indispensable part of daily life in any community, especially in ethnic minority communities. For the White Pants Dao people, communication is not only a means of conveying information but also a way to maintain family and community relationships, as well as a reflection of distinctive cultural and moral values. Their communication patterns do not merely reveal familial ties but also demonstrate the social roles and responsibilities of each member.

Their communicative behavior can be categorized into two key contexts: intra-family communication and community/social communication. Each of these settings has unique characteristics that reflect the social and cultural values of the White Pants Dao community.

Communication within the family: For the White Pants Dao people, the family is the fundamental social unit in which kinship, roles, and responsibilities are clearly manifested through both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Intra-family communication displays key features that highlight mutual respect and affection among members, especially between parents and children and across generations.

Based on a survey of 181 White Pants Dao individuals, we identified the following major family communication topics:

Table 1. Family communication topics among the White Pants Dao people

No.	Family Communication Topic	Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	Discussing agricultural work, animal husbandry, herbal medicine collection, etc.	153	84.53
2	Assigning household labor tasks	103	56.91
3	Reminding children to clean the house and take care of family members	127	70.17
4	Reminding children to study and practice self-discipline	129	71.27
5	Teaching children proper manners, respect for elders, and love for siblings	163	90.06
6	Passing on customs and traditions (e.g., ancestor worship, weddings, funerals, etc.)	83	45.86
7	Sharing work and production experiences	102	56.35
8	Discussing and exchanging news and events in the community	64	35.36

Based on Table 1, we can observe that communication among family members mainly revolves around practical and everyday topics. The most frequently mentioned theme is educating children on proper manners, respect for the elderly, and sibling love, accounting for 90.06%. This indicates that families place special emphasis on moral education, appropriate behavior, and preserving traditional values.

Following that are topics related to discussions about farming, animal husbandry, and medicinal plant collection (84.53%), reminders for children to study and practice self-discipline (71.27%), and reminders to clean the house and care for family members (70.17%). These figures reflect the role of family communication in maintaining household order and fostering a disciplined, healthy living environment.

In addition, themes such as division of labor (56.91%) and sharing experiences in labor and production (56.35%), though not as highly ranked, still reflect mutual support and cooperation in daily life.

Notably, the exchange of news and events within the community has the lowest percentage (35.36%), suggesting that interest in external social issues is still limited in internal family communication.

Furthermore, the transmission of customs and traditions (45.86%), though not high, still plays an important role in preserving cultural identity.

Thus, the data in the table shows that family communication not only serves to manage daily activities but also plays a significant role in educating and transmitting cultural and moral values to the next generation.

In White Pants Dao families, the relationship between parents and children is built on respect, affection, and education. Parents not only teach their children about culture and social norms but also convey moral values such as filial piety, honesty, respect for elders, and a simple lifestyle. Communication within the family is not limited to verbal expressions but is also manifested through actions, living attitudes, and daily behavior. Through this, parents inspire and help shape the personality and lifestyle orientation of their children. The role of parents is both that of a teacher and a role model, helping to maintain and promote the traditional values of the White Pants Dao community.

Example 1:

A Páo: Hello, Mr. Linh! Yesterday I saw your son politely greet the elders-he's really well-behaved. How do you teach him that?

A Linh: Hello, Mr. Páo! There's nothing too special, really. I just always remind him from a young age that, as Dao people, we must respect the elderly and practice humility. That's the root of being a good person.

A Páo: That's right. Kids these days learn a lot of things in school, but forgetting moral values is dangerous. I've seen many children who don't even greet their elders or listen to their parents.

A Linh: Yes, that's why I often tell him old stories - about our ancestors, how they upheld respect, kept their word, and lived with compassion. Those things aren't taught in schoolbooks

(A Pao: Chào pẻ Linh, cảm nời giả phật nhu sậy lễ phép chao hỏi mân lủ, ngoan lảm pẻ, pẻ dạy chau cách nào vậy.

Pẻ Linh: Chào pẻ Pao, xí má nai thầu đặc biệt để giả chỉ luôn nhắc cháu tẳg kiẻn mân dao pẻn phải biẻt tôn trọng người già, kính trên nhường dưới. Đó là gốc rễ của đảo làm mân.

Pao: Toi gỏ, mân sậy dỏ ho dung đặng, nhưng mà nhu cỏ đảo lý là nguy hiẻm bẻ, dả phật nhiều lan má pẻy chào hỏi má mừng gì phá.

Linh: ừ. Bởi vậy giả vẫn kể cho mừng chuyện xưa, chuyện tổ tiên mình cách ủng cô giầu lễ giầu lời sống nghĩa tình. Nhưng điều đó dạy trong thầu má nai đề.

Sibling Relationships within the Family: In addition to the parent-child relationship, communication within the White Pants Dao family is also reflected in the relationships between siblings. These relationships are typically characterized by mutual sharing and support in both household duties and daily life. However, in White Pants Dao families, each member's role is distinctly defined, depending on factors such as age, status within the family, and kinship hierarchy.

Siblings are often responsible for helping one another, especially with physically demanding tasks such as agricultural labor, house construction, or participating in communal festivals. Communication among siblings involves cooperation, coordination, and mutual assistance in household tasks, expressed not only through words but also through concrete actions. Supporting each other in family work is also a way of demonstrating love, unity, and closeness within the family.

Parent-Child Relationships:

In White Pants Dao families, the parent-child relationship is built on a foundation of respect, education, and affection. Parents serve as guides, teaching their children life values - from preserving cultural traditions to adhering to important social norms. Communication within the family, particularly between parents and children, is not limited to verbal exchanges but also involves the transmission of moral values and social behavioral standards.

Notably, Dao parents do not only provide material guidance but also nurture their children with spiritual and moral education. They are responsible for instilling values such as filial piety, respect for the elderly, honesty, and a simple lifestyle. Communication between parents and children occurs not just through verbal instruction, but also through actions, gestures, and ways of living. These serve to inspire and shape the character and life orientation of the next generation.

Communication Beyond the Family:

Beyond the household, communication within the community and broader society also holds significant importance for the White Pants Dao people. Living primarily in mountainous regions, the Dao community is closely knit and socially cohesive. Their communication in society reflects cultural values, social relationships, and behavioral norms that they hold in high regard.

Community Communication:

In White Pants Dao society, communication among community members occurs frequently through communal activities, festivals, meetings, and especially religious ceremonies. This type of communication goes beyond information exchange—it functions as a means of maintaining social relationships, fostering unity, and promoting mutual support.

Example 2: *Ms. Mây: Uncle Tòng, our village is organizing the cấp sắc ceremony for the young men this year-it's going to be lively, isn't it?*

Uncle Tòng: Yes, Ms. Mây. The cấp sắc ceremony is a very important ritual for us Dao people. The whole village joins in the preparations - some set up the tents, others take care of the food, and the mo

(spiritual master) performs the rites. Everyone is excited. It's not just a religious ceremony, but also an occasion for the whole community to gather and strengthen our unity!

(Mẫy: áo tòng này nhặng nay giàng pán tổ chức lễ cấp sắc páy xa tau thanh niên, khéo đùm vui sáng bẹ

Tòng: vâng. Ô mẫy lễ cấp sắc là nghi lễ rất quan trọng của môn đạo pản mà. Cả bản cùng tin đòi góp sức chuẩn bị môn thi dựng rạp, môn thi lo cỗ bàn thầy thì ay lễ ti môn xí háo hức má chầy là nghi lễ tôn giáo sí bằng dịp ti đòi cộng đồng quây quần, đoàn kết hơn)

Community activities of the White Pants Dao people include festivals, worship rituals, and village meetings, all conducted with strict communication rules that reflect respect and solidarity. Communication during these events is not only formal but also expresses the close bonds between individuals, contributing to social harmony and mutual support in daily life. Besides spoken language, communication is also conveyed through actions—such as jointly preparing offerings, decorating, or organizing rituals—clearly demonstrating neighborly affection and a strong sense of community responsibility.

In productive work such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicrafts, the White Pants Dao people also maintain frequent communication. This serves to assign tasks, share techniques, and support one another, especially in physically demanding tasks. Communication in labor not only sustains livelihoods but also strengthens community cohesion.

While family communication focuses on closeness and intergenerational bonding, social communication plays a key role in maintaining communal relationships and promoting the traditional cultural values of the White Pants Dao people.

2.1.2. Forms of Address between "Higher Role – Lower Role" Pairs among the White Pants Dao People in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province in Formal Communication

Forms of address are an important element in the communication culture of the White Pants Dao people, particularly in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province. The way people address one another clearly reflects the hierarchy within the community, demonstrating respect for elders and those in higher social positions. The White Pants Dao live in a society with a well-defined hierarchical structure, where relationships between members are clearly expressed through the use of address terms.

In formal communication, such as during rituals, festivals, or meetings, the forms of address between "higher role – lower role" pairs are strictly regulated. The "higher role" usually refers to elders, clan leaders, village chiefs, or respected senior individuals; the "lower role" refers to younger people or those with a lower social position. These forms of address are not only a means of communication but also an expression of traditional values, affirming each individual's role and position within the

community. As such, address terms help maintain social order, mutual respect, and preserve the unique cultural values of the White Pants Dao people.

In the White Pants Dao society, those in the "higher role" often include the elderly, village heads, clan leaders, and senior members in families or the community. Meanwhile, the "lower role" refers to younger individuals, those with less life experience, or those holding lower positions within the family or community.

Table 2. Forms of address used between “higher role – lower role” pairs among the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province in formal communication

No.	Forms of Address	Number of Terms	Percentage (%)	Example
1	Addressing by name	32	11.39%	<i>Tân Phai, Lù Páo, Phùng Tĩnh,...</i>
2	Addressing by personal pronouns	58	20.64%	<i>tao, mày, tớ, cậu, tôi, ông, bà, chúng tao, bọn mày, họ,...</i>
3	Addressing by kinship terms	95	33.81%	<i>bố, mẹ, ông, bà, anh, chị, em, chú, bác, cậu, thím, cô, dì,...</i>
4	Addressing by other words	17	6.05%	<i>lão, người ta, nhà kia, thằng, con đó, đồ kia,...</i>
5	Addressing by titles or positions	28	9.96%	<i>trưởng bản, thầy mo, ông cúng, cán bộ, chủ lễ,...</i>
6	Addressing by combination of forms	39	13.88%	<i>ông Páo, thầy Phai, bác Tân, chú Lù,...</i>
7	No addressing (implicit reference)	12	4.27%	
Total		281	100%	

From Table 2, the following comments can be made:

The system of address terms used by the White Pants Dao people is quite rich and is divided into many types: addressing by name, by personal pronouns, by kinship terms, by titles, by other words, and by combinations. Among them, addressing by kinship terms accounts for the highest proportion (33.81%), reflecting the importance of blood relationships and hierarchy within families and clans. Addressing by personal pronouns (20.64%) and combined forms (13.88%) are also common, showing flexibility in communication situations.

Addressing by kinship terms: This is the most popular form. The White Pants Dao people address each other using terms like “bố”, “mẹ”, “ông”, “bà”, “anh”, “chị”, “em”, “chú”, “bác”, “cậu”, “dì”, etc., not only within the family but also extended to the community as a way to show respect and intimacy.

Example 3: *Girl: "Uncle Páo, tomorrow I'm going to the market, do you need anything?"*

Uncle Páo: "Just a bit of white salt. Thank you, dear!"

(Daughter: Bạc Páo ơi, hôm chá ninh chầu phiên bạc hâu mài thẩu a.

Uncle Páo: Bạc chỉ cần tí đầu pe mù, cảm ơn thân ba.)

In this dialogue, the terms "bác" and "cháu" do not necessarily reflect a blood relationship but indicate social position and politeness in communication.

Addressing by personal pronouns: Pronouns like "tôi", "mày", "tao", "chúng tôi", "bọn mày", "ông", "bà", etc., are used depending on rank, age, and intimacy. However, the Dao people often avoid direct pronouns in formal situations, opting instead for kinship or combined forms.

Example 4:

Grandfather: "I told you already, don't let the field overgrow like that."

Grandson: "Yes, I know my mistake, I'll clean it tomorrow."

(Grandfather: Dả bu mi rồi, thao bấu pẩy ngoa thao mọc ôm tùm nấng ní như thế.

Grandson: Vâng, thần pẩy lỗi rồi, xôm thần căn đón sạch.)

Here, "tao" and "mày" are used in close relationships with an educational tone. The pronouns reflect the authority of elders over the younger generation.

Addressing by names and combinations: Using personal names like "Lù Páo", "Tần Phai", "Dìn Thị Mây" is common, especially when combined with titles or kinship terms such as "bác Tần", "ông Lù", "cô Mây". This way of addressing ensures clarity in communication while showing respect and identifying the person's position in the community.

Example 5:

Village chief: "Is aunt Mây attending the village meeting today?"

Villager: "Yes, she said she'd come a bit late because she's finishing up some work in the field."

(Village chief: Mu Mây bát nhá i tai họp bản a.

Villager: Dạ có ạ, mu ấy bảo tí tai a tí vì i ay nốt việc ngoài bấu.)

The name "cô Mây" combines the kinship term "cô" (aunt) with the personal name to respectfully refer to someone.

Addressing by titles or positions: Titles like “trưởng bản” (village chief), “thầy mo” (shaman), “ông cúng” (ceremony master), “cán bộ” (official), “chủ lễ” (ritual leader) are used in religious ceremonies, community meetings, or official events. Using such titles helps define roles and responsibilities in the community.

Example 6:

Villager: “Village chief, are we holding the harvest festival tomorrow?”

Village chief: “Yes. I’m asking the shaman to choose an auspicious day for the ritual.”

(Villager: Trưởng bản ơi: phởm păn. Tổ chức lễ mừng xăng plau.

Village chief: Chầy gô, giả đang nhu sây khăm nôi gong ay lễ.)

Here, the titles “trưởng bản” (village chief) and “thầy mo” (shaman) are used formally, reflecting the spiritual and organizational structure of the Dao community.

Addressing by other words and absence of address: In some cases, address terms like “lão” (old man), “đứa đó” (that kid), “người kia” (that person) indicate distance or lack of friendliness. Meanwhile, the absence of address often occurs when social relationships are too clear or in ceremonies where speech is directed to sacred entities.

Example 7:

(During a ritual ceremony)

Shaman (to the attendees): “Obey the command. Do not disobey.” (The participants bow their heads in silence.)

No specific address is used here because the statement is directed at the entire community in a sacred context and carries a ritualistic, commanding tone.

In conclusion, the system of address terms used by the White Pants Dao people shows a harmonious blend of traditional ethnic characteristics and modern communicative flexibility. The diverse ways of addressing reflect strong social bonds, a high sense of community, and unique cultural traits. They also show a developed linguistic awareness and a conscious effort to maintain tradition in daily speech.

Furthermore, this address system should be studied and preserved as it is an important part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Dao people in particular and of Vietnam’s ethnic minorities in general. Educating younger generations to preserve traditional addressing norms and polite speech is essential. Conversations within families, festivals, religious rituals, and community life all serve as environments that nurture and sustain this rich linguistic system.

From the specific examples in the life of the White Pants Dao, we can see that addressing is not merely a linguistic element, but also a mirror reflecting the spirit, relationships, and cultural values of an entire ethnic community.

In summary, the forms of address between superiors and subordinates in the formal communication of the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An commune, Yen Binh district, Yen Bai province, are not only a linguistic matter but also a manifestation of social relationships. They reflect respect and reverence in communication. These addressing forms hold value not only during festivals and rituals but also throughout daily life, serving as an essential part of the Dao cultural heritage and contributing to the preservation and promotion of ethnic traditions.

2.2. Linguistic Characteristics of the Higher–Lower Roles Among the White Pants Dao People in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province, in Informal Communication

2.2.1. Communication Topics of the Higher–Lower Roles Among the White Pants Dao People in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province, in Informal Communication

Communication is an essential component of social life, especially in ethnic minority communities, where norms, language usage, and speech acts are clearly defined according to generations and hierarchical positions. For the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province, informal communication (i.e., outside of ceremonies, official meetings, or formal rituals) between higher and lower roles plays an important part in expressing intimacy, respect, and maintaining social harmony. Even in casual, everyday situations, communication rules are strictly observed, particularly the distinction between higher and lower roles in intergenerational relationships.

The White Pants Dao mostly reside in the northern mountainous areas of Vietnam, and Phuc An Commune is one of their traditional settlements. Their communication culture strongly emphasizes generational hierarchy and social status within both family and community. The distinction between higher roles (those who are older or have higher social status) and lower roles (those who are younger or hold less authority) is a fundamental principle in preserving social order and traditional values.

Although informal conversations are typically more relaxed and intimate, generational norms and respect for hierarchy are still maintained. Interactions between higher and lower roles not only demonstrate reverence but also reinforce close-knit community bonds.

In informal settings, individuals in higher roles—those of older age or with significant standing in the family or community—often take the lead in initiating conversations and determining the direction of discussion. Even when the tone is casual, their speech reflects their responsibility in guiding younger generations and upholding family values and customs.

Topics commonly raised by those in higher roles include personal experiences, life advice, traditional tales, and family or community history. These conversations help pass down knowledge and reinforce cultural heritage. Seniors may also remind younger people of important customs, community

obligations, or proper behavior. Such conversations are both instructive and nurturing, contributing to a shared sense of identity and continuity.

Moral teachings and behavioral guidance are also common themes. These communications highlight values such as unity, respect for elders, and communal responsibility - key to maintaining harmony within the family and community.

Those in lower roles, often younger individuals, mainly act as attentive listeners in informal conversations. Although they may speak, they tend to avoid initiating serious or controversial topics, especially when communicating with elders or those of higher standing.

Lower roles typically talk about everyday life: their work, household concerns, or casual events. They may ask for guidance in farming or family matters or check in on the well-being of those in higher roles. While seemingly simple, these topics reflect a caring attitude and help reinforce generational ties.

They rarely take control of the conversation's direction. Instead, they wait for signals from those in higher roles and participate respectfully, often expressing agreement, asking follow-up questions, or showing interest in what is being shared. These actions not only show respect but also demonstrate a willingness to learn.

Even in informal contexts, traditional etiquette is preserved. Lower roles refrain from interrupting, contradicting, or showing impatience. Instead, they listen carefully and respond with humility. Respectful gestures - such as standing up when elders arrive or using honorific forms - remain important.

Meanwhile, higher roles often speak in a gentle and caring tone, using their life experience to teach and encourage the younger generation. Still, they maintain a level of formality and expectation, reinforcing traditional norms even in relaxed settings.

Such conversations are not only means of communication but also mechanisms of cultural preservation. They help pass on traditions, values, and expectations from generation to generation, ensuring continuity within the White Pants Dao community.

In sum, the communication topics shared between higher and lower roles in informal settings reflect both a clear social hierarchy and a deep sense of mutual respect and affection. These conversations help maintain familial bonds and strengthen the cultural identity of the White Pants Dao people.

2.2.2. Forms of Address Between Higher and Lower Roles Among the White Pants Dao People in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province, in Informal Communication

In the traditional society of the White Pants Dao people in Phuc An Commune, Yen Binh District, Yen Bai Province, forms of address play an essential role in maintaining social order, especially in informal communication. Exchanges between those in higher roles and those in lower roles reflect respect,

familial affection, and social relationships. Although informal situations are not as solemn as formal ones, the way people address each other still clearly shows role distinctions, helping to preserve harmonious and enduring intergenerational relationships.

The White Pants Dao primarily reside in the northern mountainous regions of Vietnam, with Phuc An Commune being one of their prominent communities. Their culture places great emphasis on family and communal relationships. One notable feature is the distinction between higher and lower roles in those relationships. Individuals in higher roles are typically elders with life experience and hold significant positions in the family or lineage. Those in lower roles tend to be younger generations who are expected to be obedient and eager to learn.

While informal communication among the White Pants Dao allows for greater freedom in topics and expression, addressing others remains a structured practice to show respect to elders and uphold social harmony.

In informal settings, individuals in higher roles - typically elders or those with respected positions in the family or community - use language that maintains a sense of respect and dignity, even in casual conversations. Forms of address such as “ông”, “bà”, “cô”, “chú”, and “bác” are used to refer to elders or those with status in the family or lineage. When speaking, people in higher roles may use simpler terms but still convey a respectful tone toward those in lower roles.

For instance, when speaking with family members or close acquaintances, someone in a higher role might refer to themselves as “tao” or “mình” (informal first-person pronouns), but address the other person—regardless of their relative age—with terms like “ông”, “bà”, “chị” or “em” depending on the relationship and age difference. This reflects both respect and familiarity, making the interaction feel more natural and intimate.

Even in informal conversations, those in higher roles maintain a leading position and usually initiate and direct the conversation. They often share life experiences, traditional stories, or offer advice on how to live properly and interact with others. These interactions serve not only as communication but also as a way to strengthen family bonds and show the younger generation how to behave respectfully.

Individuals in lower roles always pay close attention to using modest and respectful terms when speaking with elders or those in higher social positions. They commonly address those in higher roles using terms like “ông,” “bà,” “chị,” “cô,” or “bác” to express respect. Even in casual contexts, forms of address continue to highlight the generational and hierarchical divide.

In informal conversations, younger individuals are often cautious with their language. They avoid interrupting elders and instead listen attentively, showing deference through both their words and behavior. When they wish to participate in the discussion, they do so gently and respectfully, often asking about everyday matters such as work, health, or family life.

A distinctive feature in the informal speech of the White Pants Dao is the use of pronouns such as “em”, “cháu”, or “con” by those in lower roles when addressing elders. This expresses humility and reverence, especially when younger speakers want to show gratitude or affection. Even when addressing peers who hold higher family or community status, respectful terms like “ông” or “bà” may still be used.

Forms of address between higher and lower roles in informal communication are not only important in maintaining family relationships but also in reinforcing the traditional cultural values of the White Pants Dao people. These address patterns reflect deep respect for elders and experienced individuals, while also creating a warm, respectful environment for intergenerational exchange of ideas and experiences.

In such settings, these forms of address help strengthen bonds within families, among friends, and across the community. They embody not just politeness but also a deeply rooted sense of unity and continuity. This way, younger generations are able to absorb valuable lessons from their elders, contributing to the preservation and development of traditional cultural values.

3. CONCLUSION

In terms of address terms, the White Pants Dao people possess a rich and systematic system that clearly reflects hierarchical social relationships. Younger individuals or those of lower status (such as children or juniors) use kinship nouns like “pò”, “nà”, “cháu”, “chú”, “mệ”, etc., when addressing elders or those in higher positions.

Meanwhile, people in higher positions often refer to those below them using given names, nicknames, or terms that convey intimacy and familiarity—yet still imply a directional hierarchy—such as “cái”, “thằng”, “con”, “mày”, etc. This clearly reveals a linguistic power asymmetry between the two social roles.

Forms of address help maintain social order, foster closeness and respect across generations, and express love for one’s homeland and cultural heritage.

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