

When ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam’ Are Not: Address Terms and Reference Terms Students Use for Faculty in a Ghanaian University

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Abstract

Address terms and reference terms are common but key naming behaviours that are enacted in various social interactions. Thus, unsurprisingly, they have received much attention in sociolinguistic research since the 1960s. The use of these two communicative acts in the academic setting, however, seems under-researched. This study, therefore, investigated address terms and reference terms students used for faculty in a public university in Ghana, utilizing Scott’s (1990) sociological theory on resistance to domination. An ethnographic as well as a triangulated approach, comprising participant and non-participant observations, semi-structured interview, and introspection, was used in the study. Analysis of the data revealed three major findings. First, students used three principal forms of address, namely titles, kinship terms, and nicknames for faculty. Second, students used titles, personal names, and nicknames as the major reference terms for faculty. Finally, address terms and reference terms functioned as symbols of domination and resistance to domination as well as markers of identities which were co-constructed by students. The study has implications for theory, intercultural communication, and further research.

Keywords: address terms, reference terms, domination, resistance, students, faculty

1 Introduction

In the last three decades, the verbal behaviour exhibited by individuals and members of various groups in different socio-cultural contexts has garnered much attention in Applied Linguistics, in general, and in Sociolinguistics, in particular. These forms of verbal behaviour are important in revealing not only the nature of interpersonal relationship but also the socio-cultural aspects of a speech community. A key human verbal behaviour in social interaction involves naming practices, which are more specifically and often considered in the sociolinguistics literature as address terms and reference terms.

An address term is seen as a linguistic expression used by interactants to designate each other in a one-on-one dyadic relationship (Oyetade, 1995). It is thus used in the presence of the interactants, though this need not be face-to-face, given the availability of technology in the form of telephone, facsimile, or the internet. A reference term, on the other hand, is used to designate a human referent who is either present or not in a communicative encounter; it is usually nominative, rather than vocative. According to Dickey (1997), the linguistic item used to talk about a person in his/her absence (that is, reference term) is not always the same as the one used to address him/her in a one-on-one encounter (that is, address term). Several studies on naming practices in the sociolinguistics literature have focused on the following: a) either address terms (e.g. Brown & Ford, 1961) or reference terms (e.g. Egblewogbe, 1987; Hatakami, 1997) and b) both reference terms and address terms (e.g. Dickey, 1997). The present study belongs to the latter group.

In what follows, we highlight the research focus by stating the aim of the study as well as the research questions. The conceptual background to the study is then presented by means of explicating the theory that underpins the study and the empirical studies on the two naming practices (that is, address terms and reference terms) in various contexts. Thereafter, the research design and methodological procedures are discussed. This is followed by the analysis and discussion. The conclusion consists of the summary and implications of findings of the study.

2 Aim of the Study

This paper aims to explore the address terms and reference terms used for faculty (that is, the same referent or person) by students in a public university in Ghana in order to show how power is manifested and resisted in verbal interactions. The following questions address this concern:

1. What address terms do university students use for faculty on campus?
2. What reference terms do university students use for faculty on campus?
3. What is the relationship between the address terms and reference terms used by university students for faculty on campus?

It is important to note that answering the first two questions provide the basis for answering the last question.

3 Theoretical Perspective

The study is conducted from the perspective of Scott's (1990) sociological theory on resistance to domination. Scott's (1990) theory emerged out of his analysis of how peasants resisted power and/or domination. Although his initial analysis focused on a Malay village, he later extended his studies to similar communities and generalized that peasants as well as other people in subordinate positions around the world resisted power and/or domination the same way as those he studied. Scott (1990) contrasts his theory with Gramsci's (1971) concept of 'hegemony', which postulates that domination and power exist in social structure and that people in subordinate positions come to accept domination as natural and legitimate, having been constrained by the ideologies that have been vested in them by society.

To Scott (1990), dominated groups do not accept domination as 'normal'. Rather, they resist domination and power in subtle ways that elude their superiors. Such resistance is manifest in discourse, including verbal behaviours. Scott (1990) thus distinguishes between two discourses: 'public transcript' and 'hidden transcript', of people in subordinate positions. Public transcript is the socially sanctioned or normal discourse structures that characterize the verbal interaction between superiors and subordinates. Hidden transcript is the discourse that goes on behind the corridors of power; that is, a set of communicative phenomena that people in subordinate positions develop to talk about their superiors in their absence. The hidden transcript is thus a critique of power by the powerless when they (the powerless) are safely distant from its corridors. According to Scott (1990), the hidden transcript can leak into the public discourse through gossip, theatrical performance, and other indirect behavioural strategies that enable a "critique of power while hiding behind anonymity" (p. xiii).

In the present study, address terms are assumed to be part of the public transcript of the verbal interaction between students and faculty in their day-to-day interactions while reference terms are considered part of the hidden transcript of students, which they employ as means of critiquing and/or resisting power and subordination offstage. It must be emphasised here that the way students use language and particularly reference terms to critique and/or resist power may be different from the verbal forms used by peasants and other proletariats in resisting and or critiquing power. This is because there is apparent qualitative difference between the kind of power enacted between faculty and students in a higher educational context such as the university and the power relations between servants and their masters.

By applying Scott's (1990) theory to the present study, we particularly focus on the distinction between 'public transcript' and 'hidden transcript' to claim that the naming culture that students adopt in their face-to-face interactions with faculty will tend to reflect the socially sanctioned mode of interaction between teachers and students, where students will normally defer to faculty and will be more inclined to using polite forms. On the other hand, the reference terms that students adopt for faculty in interactions among themselves and especially in non-official contexts will indicate a tendency to resist the subordination enforced by the socially sanctioned mode of interaction. Again, for the purpose of this study, the term 'domination' is defined as wielding social control or power. In this sense, domination does not mean the abuse of social power, as has been defined by Van Dijk (2006) and might have been intended by Scott (1990). Power is also defined as one's possession of relatively more social goods such as higher education, knowledge and social status than others (Gee, 1999).

4 Past studies on address terms and reference terms

This section reviews past studies on address terms and reference terms in non-academic contexts, followed by those in academic contexts, with the view to establishing whether there are any differences and similarities as well as a gap in the literature.

4.1 *In non-academic contexts*

Early studies on address terms, pioneered by Brown and Gilman (1960), focused on the power and solidarity postulates. Focusing on the pronominal address system in 20 European and Indian languages, they argued that in symmetrical relations interactants use the more familiar pronouns, but in asymmetrical relations the subordinate addresses the superior with the formal pronouns while the superior addresses the subordinate with either the formal or informal pronouns. Other early studies such as Brown and Ford (1961), Ervin-Tripp (1972), and Brown and Levinson (1987) corroborated this power-solidarity postulate in the choice of address terms in social interactions.

Subsequent studies (e.g. Fitch, 1991; Morford, 1995; Oyetade, 1995; Aceto, 2002) seem to have faulted the power and solidarity postulate for being too deterministic in supposing a pre-existing cultural system from which verbal practices are built. This direction had been anticipated by Evans-Pritchard (1948) who highlighted the use of non-kinship terms among the Nuer living around the Nile. Similarly, Aceto (2002) demonstrated how the members of the Anglophone Creole-speaking community of Panama appropriate personal names to resist cultural decay and enact their true cultural identity. Studies on reference terms, especially personal names (e.g. Dakubu, 1981; Scotton & Zhu, 1983; Egblewogbe, 1987; Luong, 1990; Akrofi & Owusu-Ansah, 1995; Guma, 2001), have also increased our understanding of the influence of various cultures and socio-historical events on verbal behaviour and the complexity of social relations. For instance, Akrofi and Owusu-Ansah's (1995) work on personal names as reference terms show the influence of Europeans (Portuguese, Dutch, and English) on the names of people living along the coastal town of Elmina in Ghana.

Moreover, given the situatedness of address terms several emerging sociolinguistic studies (Mashiri, 2000; Afful, 2006a, 2006b; Cao, 2007; Ugorji, 2009) have further noted the influence of social variables such as age, gender, and social status. Cao's (2007) study of address forms in Chinese personal letters found that age is a significant determinant of the choice of address forms and that females tend to use familiarity-oriented terms to emphasise emotional bond with recipients while males tend to use status-oriented terms to stress role-relationships. Oyetade's (1995) study on how socio-cultural factors such as age, gender, and the beliefs and norms of the Yoruba people in Nigeria influence the use of address has led to a considerable number of studies with a similar intent in several African countries such as Ghana (Afful, 1998), Zimbabwe (Mashiri, 1999, 2000), and Botswana (Akindele, 2009).

Increasingly, we are also witnessing an emerging and interesting set of studies on address terms and reference terms in various domains such as the media (Edu-Buandoh, 1999), politics (e.g. Fang & Heng, 1983; Keshavarz, 1988; Leech, 1999a; Jaworski & Galasinski, 2000; Ile, 2005, 2010; Rendle-Short, 2007), sports (e.g. Rendle-Short, 2009, 2010), medicine or health care delivery (e.g. Bergman *et al.*, 1988; Elizabeth, 1989) and religion (e.g. Sequeira, 1988; Dzameshie, 1997). Specifically, Edu-Buandoh's (1999) work reveals the role of politeness and power on the naming practices of both the hosts/hostesses in radio panel discussions in Ghana. Also, as far as we know, the earliest and explicit studies on the use of address terms in politics seem to be those by Fang and Heng (1983) and Keshavarz (1988), who show the influence of political changes in China and Iran. Naming practices in modern political systems have also received attention in studies by Obeng (1997) in Ghana, Jaworski and Galasinski (2000) in Poland, Kuo (2003) in Taiwan, and Ile (2005, 2010) in Sweden. In the last five years we have witnessed an interesting set of studies on what Leech (1999b) calls 'familiarizers' among males, especially in sports (Rendle-Short, 2009, 2010). These familiarizers include 'mate', 'guys', 'man', and 'bro'.

Despite the numerous studies on both naming practices from various geographical settings and with different approaches, very few studies (e.g. Luong, 1988; Lorente, 2002) have explored both address terms and reference terms in a single study from the point of view of critical theory. Lorente (2002), for instance, has demonstrated that address terms and reference terms serve as emblems of domination and resistance to domination respectively among Filipino workers and their superiors. She intimates that domestic workers used address terms that denote master-servant relationship for their superiors and in turn received terms that stress their subordinating and inferior role. On the other hand, the workers used either kinship terms or nicknames as reference terms, to assume a familial relationship with their superiors or to emphasise the negative attitudes of their superiors.

4.2 *In academic contexts*

As far as we know, the earliest study on naming practices (that is, address terms and reference terms) in academic/educational settings was the one by McIntire (1972). In this study, McIntire examined terms used by students when addressing faculty in a Social Sciences department in a West Coast university. Since then, several other studies have been conducted in Anglo-American (e.g. Murphy, 1988; Dickey, 1997; Kiesling, 1998; Formentelli, 2009), Asian (Kim, 1996; Anwar, 1997; Li, 1997), and African (Afful, 2006b; Arua & Alimi, 2009; Dornyo, 2010) contexts. In this section, we characterise these studies in two ways: a) students naming of their mates b) students' naming of faculty. As can be seen, it is the latter set that is of much more relevance to the study.

Concerning the former group of studies, we notice a wider range, from Anglo-American context to Africa. In particular, Kiesling (1998) examines 'Dude', a solidarity term (or what Leech calls a 'familiarizer') used as an identity marker among white American male students in a fraternity. Further, in a study conducted among students in Hong Kong, Wong and Leung (2004) found that although addressing each other in Chinese is more common than in the past, students' choice of

English address terms reflects an identity predicated on their field of study, the culture of secondary school and peer pressure. A similar study was conducted by Li (1997) among another set of Hong Kong students with similar findings. Anwar's (1997) study among only Malay undergraduate students pointed to their Islamic identity.

Regionally, Afful (2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) seems to be a key figure on the scholarship of address terms used among university students in Africa. He has explored the use of address terms among Ghanaian students at a public university from various perspectives. His studies have paid attention to the range of forms of address terms; the influence of social variables such as age and gender; the influence of formality; and the construction (and resistance) of multiple identities. The studies by Crozier and Dimmock (1999), De Klerk and Bosch (1997, 1999), and Dornyo (2010) on students' naming practices have highlighted the use of nicknames as a key form of address. In particular, De Klerk and Bosch (1999) associate nickname formation with linguistic creativity and verbal playfulness. This view of nicknames is also partially given expression in the work of Dornyo (2010) and Afful (2006b).

The notable studies involving address terms and reference terms for faculty include those by McIntire (1972), Murphy (1988), Dickey (1997), Harris *et al* (1999), and quite recently Formentelli (2009). In the earliest study, McIntire found out that students avoided any terms or used zero address terms when addressing faculty, with only a few instances of TLN; she explains the use of zero address terms as symptomatic of confusion of norms. Unlike McIntire, Harris *et al* (1999) used only the questionnaire to investigate the effect of academic degree, gender, age, and geographical region on the predicted use of two selected address forms based on the solidarity and power postulate among only academic staff. Murphy (1988) used a questionnaire to elicit the reference terms used by undergraduate university students in Brown University for faculty and colleague students. Murphy (1988) found that speaker's choice of reference terms is significantly, but in varying degrees, influenced by such factors as speaker-referent relationship, addressee-referent relationship, and the presence of bystanders. He also found that a speaker would often shift from his or her original choice of reference term to adopt a term used by his addressee. Arua and Alimi (2009) is the only pertinent study from Africa, although the reference terms for faculty in the University of Botswana are only mentioned as part of students' slangs.

Dickey studied both address terms and reference terms among faculty and students involving European speakers (mainly British and American). She observed that in some cases the terms used in referring to people are the same that are used in addressing them. Where these differ, Dickey (1997) notes that speakers tend to adapt to the usage of their listeners. Formentelli's work is useful in that it attempts to find out whether the use of address terms by both faculty and students in a British university is cultural, given that Dickey's work combined both British and Americans. The study largely confirmed previous studies but indicated the presence of the power postulate in vertical relationships such as student-lecturer interaction. That is, students often used Title (T)/Last Name (LN) as address terms for faculty but First Name (FN) minimally as a reference term or what Formentelli (2009) describes as usage in 'delayed time'.

In sum, the review of the sociolinguistics literature on address terms and reference terms reveals three key issues. First, explorations on address terms and reference terms in both academic and

non-academic contexts have contributed to our understanding of various cultures and key factors that influence human behaviour, in general, and verbal behaviour, in particular. Second, although a few studies, such as Lorente's (2002), have been conducted on these two key communicative elements from the perspective of Scott's critical theory, to the best of our knowledge, no study has applied this theory in exploring the two selected naming practices in an academic context. Again, no major study has been conducted on both address terms and reference terms used by university students for faculty in a Ghanaian setting. These lacunae thus justify the need for the present study.

5 Methodology

This section principally touches on how data is collected in order to answer the research questions. To accomplish this task, we describe the research site as well as the methods and tools employed in conducting the study.

5.1 Research Site

In describing the research site, it is important to draw attention to three pertinent issues: the environs of the research, social units, and language use.

The research site for this study is University of Cape Coast (UCC), which was established in 1962 originally as a university college of education to train teachers for Ghana's second cycle institutions and teacher training colleges (now colleges of education). Today, UCC is structured into four faculties and three schools, namely, the Faculties of Education, Science, Social Sciences and Arts; and the Schools of Agriculture, Business, and Medical Sciences. All are spread on two main locations: New Site and Old Site. UCC is chosen for this study mainly because we find it the most convenient and accessible. Indeed, given that we have been members of the University community for some years, we are more familiar with its physical environment and social terrain than any other university in Ghana.

UCC has a population of over 15, 000 regular students drawn from every part of the country, including international students, and about 20,000 students from the distance education programmes. The students can further be classified into two groups: students in their early adulthood, who are usually admitted directly from the senior high schools and 'mature' students who are already burdened with adult responsibility and are pursuing further education for various reasons.

Also, UCC is an English-medium university, given the country's historical ties with the British. Thus, English is commonly used widely on campus – cafeteria/restaurants, car parks, lecture theatres, residential halls, offices of lectures and general offices. Students and lecturers communicate in English in both formal and informal contexts, although Ghanaian languages are used in informal contexts.

5.2 Research Design

An ethnographic approach has been adopted for this study. This approach has the potential of enabling the complex layers of the cultural practices of a group of people to be observed and recorded. With the ethnographic approach, we could also source data through the use of multiple data collection techniques and benefit from paying attention to ‘...the localized, microscopic, particular, context-bound features of given settings and cultures’ (Baxter, 2003: 85)

5.3 Data Collection Procedure

A triangulated approach, comprising observation, a semi-structured interview, and introspection, is employed in collecting the data for this study. This combined research design was to enhance the reliability and validity of the data.

The observation comprised both participant and non-participant observation conducted from April 30 to May 31, 2010 at various settings of UCC, including halls of residence, lecture theatres, offices, bus stations, and canteens. A deliberate attempt was made to vary the category of participants observed in terms of age group, gender, programme of study and status, although we do not set out to address the issue of whether these variables affect the naming practices being considered here. Similarly, the setting of the interactions observed was also varied based on factors like communicative purpose, context of situation, and physical location. The purpose of this variation was to secure a holistic picture of the use of address terms and reference terms for faculty. In all, 100 dyadic encounters were observed, tape-recorded and transcribed.

The data derived from the observation were then analysed and the initial findings became the basis for the semi-structured interview, which involved 25 students. Although the data set appears to be small, the study is meant to provide preliminary insights for a wider study). The interview was meant to be a follow-up to the observation and its purpose was clarify some issues in the observation data and double check regular patterns that emerged from the observation data. Interviewees were asked to give both the address terms and reference terms they used for faculty and give reasons why they used them. The interview guide was very flexible, consisting of just a list of topical issues derived from the observation data so that many of the questions that interviewees were asked emerged from the interaction in the form of follow-up and probing questions. Much of the interview data was recorded in writing, but a few interactions were tape recorded. The observation and interview data were supported by informal discussions and conversations we had with both students and faculty at offices, lecture theatres, bus stations, and the Junior Common Rooms. Finally, regarding introspection, the data were supported by our intuitive knowledge of the use of address and reference terms as members of the university community who have participated in these discursive practices both as students and teachers. It should be mentioned that during data collection, the second author was still a postgraduate student.

6 Address terms for faculty

The data revealed three major forms of address students use for faculty. These were titles, kinship terms and nicknames, each of which is discussed below. While the first was expected, the latter two were unexpected.

6.1 Titles

The first major set of address forms to be discussed in this study is titles. The most common group of titles used to address faculty by students consists of the general deferential forms *Sir* and *Madam*. The ages of students do not exert any strong influence on the use of this set of titles; neither does gender nor formality. We may consider the following exchange:

1. An interaction between a student and a lecturer during lectures

Student: Madam, can we also say that people who use this kind of err arguments in presenting their views show a kind of sophistication in their thinking?

Lecturer: Yes. A more intellectual capacity building ...

The complexity of the vocabulary in the above exchange reflects the high degree of formality of the interaction. As has been mentioned, the use of these titles is not restricted to formal settings, as the exchange below demonstrates:

2. An interaction between a lecturer and a student in the lecturer's office while they were having an informal chat, together with other students.

Student: Sir, thank you. God bless you (silence). Sir, please my scripts; can I take it?

Lecturer: Yeah

The use of the forms *Sir* and *Madam* marks a high degree of deference to faculty and thus enacts the traditional student-teacher relationship. This corroborates the findings of the power-oriented studies on address forms (e.g. Brown & Gilman, 1960; Brown & Ford, 1961) and the much more recent studies on the use of address terms in an academic setting (Formentelli, 2009).

The second set of titles used by students for faculty concerns academic titles. These include *Doctor* and *Professor* as well as their short forms: *Doc* and *Prof*. These academic titles are a degree more familiar and less deferential than *Sir* and *Madam*. Perhaps, to create a heightened familiarity with faculty, students tend to use the short forms more often than the full forms of academic titles. As is evident from the exchanges below, they are used in both formal and informal settings:

3. An exchange between a lecturer and a student during a lecture; the student was leading a discussion when the lecturer interrupted to clarify some concepts.

Lecturer: OK, Helen, you can go on.

Student: Thank you very much Doc.

4. An exchange between a postgraduate student and a lecturer at the lecturer's office

Student: Doc, we're getting to the General Office.

Lecturer: OK.

It must be noted that the use of the forms *Doc* and *Prof*, especially in formal settings, is more popular among postgraduate students than undergraduate students. Obviously, this tendency is due to the fact that postgraduate students are more familiar with faculty and thus do relate with them in a more familiar way than undergraduate students, as also attested to in Formentelli's (2009) work. Our data set does not show gender and age differences in the use of these more familiar or short forms.

Another group of titles used by students for faculty concerns those that denote the addressee's role in his/her non-academic life. These include religious titles such as *Reverend*, *Father*, *Osofo* (meaning pastor, Akan), *Pastor*, *Sheik*, etc. and the Akan (a major ethnic group in Ghana) honorific title for chiefs, *Nana*. Afful (2006b) found that religious titles are used playfully by peers in UCC to emphasise the addressee's possession of certain religious traits. The use of such titles in an academic community may be attributed to the fact that Ghanaians have strong reverence for religious and traditional leaders.

Generally, the use of these varied forms of titles in addressing faculty emphasises the asymmetrical relationship between students and faculty. Many recent studies have demonstrated that students in different cultures tend to use linguistic features, however different they are, to encode the social or the academic status of faculty (Harris *et al.*, 1999; Wong, 2000). Wong (2000) reports that Chinese students use very formal address forms such as titles and last names with a professional or academic title to address their teachers while Lee (2002) finds a frequent use of an exaggerated formal address system in Chinese postgraduates' emails to faculty. Manno (2005), however, notes that in Switzerland, it is rather unusual for a student to employ a title in addressing his/her instructor.

6.2 Kinship Terms

The second major linguistic feature students employ in addressing faculty is kinship terms. Presumably, these terms are usually used to mark biological relationships and so their use for faculty assumes an added significance. The most common kinship terms used are *Daddy*, *Daa*, *Dada* (for male faculty); and *Maa* (for female faculty). Others include the local Ghanaian equivalents *Papa* and *Popee*, *Egya* (*father*, in Akan) and *Wɔfa* (*uncle*, in Akan). These address forms are very often used as an endearment term, as the exchange below shows:

5. An interaction between a female student and a lecturer at the latter's office; the student requests that the lecturer downloads a document from his computer to her pen drive.

Student: *Egya*, me pa w'akyɛ o pii (meaning 'Dad, I plead with you')

Lecturer: me nnye wo den? (What should I do for you?)

Student (playfully): *papa*, I want to copy (/kopi/) – silence - *papa* won't you copy (/kopi/) the thing for me?

Apart from very informal interactions like the above cited scenario, kinship terms are also used in less informal situations, depending on the relationship between the interactants. The following illustrates this observation:

6. An interaction between a student and her project supervisor at the latter's office

Student: Dada, four authors, how do I write it?

Lecturer: All of them and their names.

One key factor that influences the use of these kinship terms is a sharp disparity between the ages of the student and the addressee; generally, they reflect a high level of familiarity between interlocutors. The following observation by an interviewee as a reason for addressing his project supervisor *Daddy* supports this claim:

We are like father and daughter; very close. We talk about anything. Not only academic; social issues ... anything, anything.

The data reveal that kinship terms, such as the forms *Daddy* and *Maa* (or their variants), are used by young female students more often than young male students, contrary to what Brown and Ford (1961) found in America; it is rather young men who often use *ma'am* for mature women. This usage may be attributed to cultural differences. Many West African cultures, in general, and Ghanaian societies, in particular, perceive the overt display of sentiments and emotions to be womanly (a sign of weakness, if displayed by a man). This situation may also apply to Chinese culture, given Cao's (2007) finding that in Chinese personal letters, female writers tend to use familiarity-oriented terms to emphasise emotional bond with recipients while males tend to use status-oriented terms to stress role-relationships.

The use of kinship terms by students to address their superiors in this study also contradicts Lorente's (2002) observation that Filipino domestic workers are forbidden by their Singaporean superiors in addressing them with kinship terms. This contradiction obviously lies in the difference in context. As Lorente (2002) rightly noted, when the domestic worker addresses her employers as kin, a special relationship is enacted that goes beyond the bond of employment in which the worker will be loved and cared for, thereby leading into a network of rights and obligations. On the other hand, the use of kinship terms for faculty may not necessarily lead to such imposition of additional obligations. We may say that it is the faithful adherence to their obligations as facilitators, mentors, counsellors and guardians by faculty that has earned them these kinship terms.

6.3 *Nicknames*

The last set of address terms to consider is nicknames. Following Aceto (2002), we distinguish between internally derived nicknames, which are nicknames that are constructed from personal names through morphophonological alterations, and externally derived nicknames, which emanate from varying pragmatic circumstances. The data revealed that only externally derived nicknames are used in addressing faculty. Generally, nicknames were the less prominently used address forms for faculty.

One exciting group of nicknames recorded in the data is those that are discipline-specific. Examples are *Aristotle*, *Plato* (Philosophy); *Archimedes* (Mathematics); *Grippus*, *Quintus Ennius*, *Aphrodite* (Classics); *Piaget* (Education) and *Karl Max* (Sociology). This finding is consistent with an earlier study (Afful, 2006b) in the same setting, though these nicknames were used for students. A lecturer may also earn a nickname by using a particular expression frequently. An example is a Physical Education instructor who is addressed as *Kalokalo* as he is fond of using the expression “Kalokalo” for a student who exhibits old-fashioned skills in sporting activities. A few nicknames such as *Obenistic* (from the Akan expression *w’abeng*, meaning s/he is brilliant) are also used to emphasise the intellectual prowess of the addressee. The use of a particular nickname for a lecturer is generally limited to a few students in a course group or programme of study and the nickname is normally co-constructed by the students and the lecturer. However, a lecturer may become popularly identified with a particular nickname such that fresh students inherit the practice of using it from continuing students even though they may not know the circumstance surrounding its use.

One major condition for the use of nicknames in addressing faculty is that the bearer of the name should be positively disposed to its use. Thus, the use of nicknames as address forms for faculty in this study tends to have the same solidarity and in-group identity marking function as the discipline-specific nicknames identified by Afful (2006b) and Dornyo (2010) among students of UCC. It is also worthy to note that though a few students use these nicknames in a one-on-one correspondence with faculty in informal contexts, they are generally used as appellatives at lectures as a form of humour and to create a convivial atmosphere. That is, students use the deferential forms at lectures when asking questions or making contributions but shout the lecturer’s nickname occasionally when jokes are shared or the lecturer displays his usual brilliance. The general avoidance of nicknames in a one-on-one correspondence is obviously due to the fact that the Ghanaian culture imposes on one the need to mark politeness when interacting with someone in authority.

7 Reference terms for faculty

We now turn to the linguistic expressions students use as reference terms for faculty. The data revealed three major forms of reference terms: titles, personal names, and nicknames.

7.1 Titles

The first type of titles employed by students for faculty as reference terms are the short forms of the academic titles *Professor* and *Doctor*; that is, *Prof* and *Doc* respectively. Since these forms are deictic, they are often used when the interactants have commonly assumed their referent in the discourse. They are often used at lectures, in offices and other places in the presence of the lecturer or when he is assumed to be present in the interaction. The exchange below may clarify this:

7. A student inquiring of a lecturer from a Senior Research Assistant (SRA) in the lecturer’s office

Student: Please, Doc is not around?

SRA: Please, can you check from the General Office?

What is interesting is that students also use these titles, especially *Prof*, for faculty who do not hold the titles in reality in a way to ridicule their authoritative attitude.

The occupational or vocation titles, such as *Sheik*, *Reverend* (or its short form *Rev*), *Pastor*, *Father* (a religious leader belonging to the Roman Catholic Church), and *Nana* (a chief) used to address faculty are also used as reference terms. Just like the address forms, they are often used to refer to faculty who play the corresponding roles of the titles in their non-academic life. Our data reveal that the use of these titles, both as address forms and reference terms, tend not to vary in terms of formality, age, gender and status.

7.2 *Personal Names*

Personal names are the commonest reference terms used for faculty. Generally, they often take seven forms:

1. Title + last name (TLN) or less often title + first name (TFN) e.g. *Mr. Ababio*, *Mr. Edja*, *Mr. Bentum*, *Teacher Atta*, *Dr. Ankomah*, *Dr. Dora*, *Professor Brown*
2. Title + (full) formal name (TFFN) e.g. *Mr. Kamkam Boadu*, *Mr. Ferdinand Ahiakpo*, *Professor Mansa Prah*, *Professor C. K. Brown*
3. Last name (LN) e.g. *Arko*, *Afful*, *Ababio*, *Abanga*, *Bediako*, *Enu-Kwesi*, *Edja*, *Bakari*
4. First name (FN) or its variant e.g. *Ishmael*, *Dora*, *Kingsley*, *Akosua*, *Kwadwo*, *Naana*
5. (Full) formal name (FFN) e.g. *Naana Opoku-Agyeman*, *Aboche Ntreh*, *Kissi Korsah*, *Kwao Andoh*, *Kamkam Boadu*
6. Title + initials e.g. Prof(essor). C. K., Prof(essor). S. Y.
7. Initials e.g. *S. K.*, *F.O.*, *C. K.*, *K. K. K.*, *J. V.*, *M. B.*, *S. Y.*, *P. K.*, *M. P.*, *B. T.*, *K. K. B.*, *YAA*,

The last example, YAA, under column 7 is an instance where some students have formed an acronym with the initials of a lecturer's full formal name, so that the resulting reference term sounds the same as the Akan name given to a Thursday-born female, Yaa. Interestingly, the lecturer concerned is a male.

The use of each of the groups of address terms listed above is determined by a number of variables. The forms Title + Last Name (TLN) and Title + First Name (TFN) are often used in formal settings such as offices. The following illustrations are cases in point:

8. An interaction between a female student and an administrative clerk

Student: Please Madam; we are looking for Miss Georgina Money.

Clerk: I don't know her.

9. An interaction between a female student and an Senior Research Assistant (SRA)

Student: Good morning.

SRA: Good morning.

Student: Please, our lecturer says we should bring our assignments here.

SRA: who is your lecturer?

Student: Professor Amy Masko.

As demonstrated by the interactions above, students strictly conform to these reference terms in formal contexts. Nonetheless, they are also used in informal conversations among students as the following interaction demonstrates:

10. An interaction between two students at the Department of English while they were waiting for their project supervisor.

Student A: So where is Mr. Coker now?

Student B: Mr. Coker is in Legon doing his PhD.

The most common reference terms used by students for faculty in informal settings such as halls of residence, cafeterias, bus stations and group discussions are Last Name (LN), First Name (FN), First Full Name (FFN) and initials. This phenomenon is illustrated below:

11. An interaction among students during a group discussion

Student A: We have a presentation this evening.

Student B: Whose presentation?

Student A: Dora

12. An interaction between two students in a hostel

Student A: So Arko is taking you in Semantics?

Student B: No. Professor Sekyi-Baidoo.

It is worth noting that ‘Dora’ and ‘Arko’ are both lecturers. Though they certainly are older than the students and occupy a higher status than the students, they are called by their FNs.

Both the observation and interview data reveal that the use of these informal reference terms seems to be the characteristic of young students. Mature students were disposed to using TLN, TFN and TFFN as reference forms for faculty. This observation is quite surprising, given that age is the dominant social variable determining politeness in Ghana (Afful, 2006a) and other African countries (Nkemleke, 2006; Akindele, 2009; Ugorji, 2009). We, however, assume that mature students choose these polite forms to show maturity and to indicate a more responsible use of language, especially in their day-to-day to interaction with the young students, who dominate the university population.

7.3 *Nicknames*

The last group of reference terms to be considered in this paper consists of nicknames. We found that both externally and internally derived nicknames (Aceto, 2002) were used as reference terms for faculty. The first set of externally derived nicknames to be discussed consists of those earned by faculty as result of their frequent use of certain expressions. Examples are provided below:

Table 1: Nicknames Derived from Frequent Use of an Expression

Nickname	Source
Kalokalo	lecturer (teaches Physical Education) is fond of using the expression to describe old fashioned skills in skills in sporting activities
Abayifoɔ (witches, Akan)	lecturer often uses expression to insult students
Finito kapito	lecturer is fond of using the expression at lectures to indicate finality, or the termination of discussion on an issue
7 o'clock news	lecturer often makes references to 7 o'clock news
Higher mortals	lecturer asserts that Master of Philosophy degree holders are higher mortals, that is, intellectually superior beings.
Levinson	Lecturer often makes reference to Brown & Levinson's politeness theory

Another set of nicknames consists of those given to lecturers because of the peculiar way they pronounce particular words. Illustrations on this observation are provided below:

Table 2: Nicknames Derived from Habitual Pronunciation of Words

Item	Gloss/Nickname
Quote	quôte (playfully initiates pronunciation with an unusually very high pitch and ends with a low pitch)
Curve	Cough (i.e. pronounced /kɔf/ instead of /ke:f)
'Tu'tuo'gyi'nam (Akan)	Tu,tuo'gyinam (the lecturer anglicises the stress pattern of the word)

* *Tuotuogyinam* is a mountain in the Eastern Region of Ghana

Faculty may also derive their nicknames from the fact that they had their higher education abroad and they either make references to practices in their former universities or tend to portray a western way of life. Examples are given below:

Table 3: Nicknames Derived from Places of Higher Education

Nickname	Source
Singapore	lecturer had his PhD in National University of Singapore and is fond of making references to the academic practices and socio-political environment of Singapore
Americaman	lecturer had his higher education in America and speaks with an American accent
Glasgow	lecturer had his PhD in Glasgow and often makes references to his experience there

Another group consists of those nicknames given to a lecturer to describe his/her physical appearance, a trait or a mannerism.

Table 4: Nickname Derived from a Trait

Nickname	Source
Papa Ajasko	lecturer has a bald head
Ɔdwii (scratcher, Akan)	lecturer often scratches his body while teaching
Bolee	lecturer has fat/big buttocks
Segge (madness, Ga)	lecturer is impulsive
Champion	lecturer is authoritative
Kabila	lecturer resembles President Kabila
The Late XXX	lecturer is often late to lectures and other gatherings

The last group of externally derived nicknames consists of titles to courses taught by the bearers of the name. Very often students assign these names because they do not know the name of the instructor. Thus, such nicknames normally circulated among course mates:

Table 5: Nicknames Derived from Course Titles

Nickname	Source
Diaspora	teaches <i>African Writers in the Diaspora</i>
Measurementman	teaches <i>Educational Measurement and Evaluation</i>
Uni-polarman	teaches <i>Africa in the Uni-polar World</i>

The second major group of nicknames is the internally derived nicknames. These are morpho-phonological derivations of personal names as illustrated below:

Personal Name Nickname

13. Substitution/suppletion

Mumuni Baba	Mark Bismark
Cobbold	Cocoaboard/cardboard

14. Blending

Gideon Nimako	Gyinima
Osei Kwarteng	Oskwart

15. Clipping

Ametewe	Amet
Sakordie	Sak

16. Others

Agyeman
Gogovi

Agingo
Gogovai

The use of nicknames as reference terms is influenced by socio-pragmatic factors. First, they are strictly informal and are used among students at halls, canteens, bus stations, and other public places. Again, nicknames appear to be used very often among young students than mature students. Although both female and male young students use nicknames, the male students tend to construct and use nicknames for faculty more than females. This observation corroborates the findings of previous studies (e. g. De Klerk & Bosch, 1997).

The findings of the present study, to a large extent, differ from Dickey's (1997) finding that students referred to faculty with the same terms they used in addressing them. Although, in our data, some students did use as reference terms for lecturers the same titles and nicknames they employ in addressing them, in most cases, the reference terms differ from the address terms. The difference between Dickey's (1997) study and the present study is not only due to the differences in the socio-cultural contexts of the two studies, but also their foci. That is, while Dickey (1997) considered interactions among reference terms and address terms used by both faculty and students in their daily interactions among one another, the present study focused on address and reference terms used for faculty by students in varying communicative encounters, including formal and informal situations.

8 Public transcript versus hidden transcript: Address terms and reference terms

We now discuss the relationship between address terms and reference terms outlined above in the light of Scott's theory on domination and resistance to domination. Generally, part of the onstage or public transcript of students consists of address forms they use for faculty in their everyday interactions with them. Thus, the address forms reflect and naturalise the power imbalance between students and faculty. Students are obliged to use deferential forms such as titles and kinship terms that denote authority to acknowledge the power and dominant role of faculty in the social structure of the University. On the other hand, part of the offstage or hidden transcript of students could well consist of the forms with which they refer to faculty beyond the reach of official bounds. Students appropriate this offstage transcript to expose the human infirmities and excesses of faculty. For example, students use the title *Prof* for a lecturer who, in reality, has not attained such a academic title in a way to ridicule his/her excessive display of authority and academic prowess. The most interesting reference terms, in this regard, are nicknames. Apart from using nicknames such as *Champion* and *General*, to criticise the authoritative behaviour that is characteristic of particular lecturers, students playfully employ a myriad of externally derived and internally derived nicknames to either ridicule the natural infirmities of faculty or just to play with the personal names of faculty. That reference terms are used as tools to critique power corroborates the findings of Lorente (2002).

Yet to say that address terms and reference terms used by students are merely emblems of domination and resistance of power is an over simplification. Address terms and reference terms in this study present a complex network of interlocking social relations. Students used address terms, in general, and nicknames and kinship terms, in particular, to co-construct individual and

social identities with faculty. Afful (2006b) found that students use discipline-conditioned nicknames such as *Karl Marx* (Sociology) and *Chomsky* (Linguistics) among themselves as identity markers. Thus, the use of similar forms in addressing faculty in this study may be an attempt by students to draw faculty into the network of student identities, thereby neutralising the hierarchical relationship that traditionally exist between students and faculty.

Despite this desire to neutralize power, students continue to re-echo their asymmetrical relationship with faculty by using titles, either with or without personal names, to refer to faculty in their absence. This leaves us with the question whether students are conditioned by the ideologies that are embedded in the Ghanaian social structure, in general, and UCC, in particular, to accept the legitimisation of power and domination, as Gramsci (1971) and Fairclough (2001) might put it. If we are to attempt explaining this phenomenon with Scott's (1990) theory, we would say that it is an instance of the public transcript spontaneously leaking into the hidden transcript.

9 Conclusion and Implications

In this study, we have employed Scott's (1990) theory on resistance to domination in analyzing address terms and reference terms used by students of UCC for faculty. The study reveals four major findings. First, students use three principal forms of address, namely, titles, kinship terms and nicknames, for faculty. Second, students employ three reference terms, namely titles, personal names, and nicknames. Thirdly, the choice of reference terms and address terms by students is influenced by the context of situation and, in varying degrees of salience, the socio-pragmatic variables of gender, age and status. Finally, address forms and reference terms for faculty do not only serve as symbols of power and resistance to power, but are also used to co-construct individual and social identities.

These findings have a number of implications. First, they contribute to the growing scholarship on address and reference terms in academic contexts, in particular (e.g. Harris *et al*, 1999; Afful, 2006a, 2006b) and the sociolinguistics scholarship on naming practices, in general. The study is a significant foundation for an extensive exploration on students' use of address and reference terms for faculty in UCC as well as other educational settings in Ghana. Second, the findings of this study have implications for Scott's (1990) theory. It provides illustrations in support of the hidden transcript and public transcript postulate by Scott (1990). Further studies are needed to comparatively examine the hidden transcript of subordinate groups explicitly based on such contextual variables as gender, age, status, and the nature of the relationship between the dominant and the dominated to enable further theorising. Other studies could also consider the address and reference terms used by faculty for students in UCC. Finally, the study has significance for intercultural communication, especially given the increasing exchange programmes on several campuses that involve both students and faculty from different cultural backgrounds.

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