Non-kinship Address Terms in Akan: A Sociolinguistic Study of Language Use in Ghana

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Following the study of Gilman and Ford on address terms, an increasing number of studies have been conducted in several sociocultural settings. In line with this trend, the present study attempts to describe and explain address terms among the Akans of postcolonial Ghana. Using observation as the main research tool corroborated by interview and introspection, the researcher noted nine principal terms of address, three (personal names, catch phrases and attention getters) of which are reported here. In particular, the influence of Westernism and modernism was reflected in the use of personal names and catch phrases. With differing levels of frequency and saliency, the use of these terms was dictated by sociocultural factors such as gender, status, age and relationship of interactants as well as pragmatic factors. These findings have implications for theory, intercultural communication and further research.

Introduction

Terms of address are an important formulaic verbal behaviour well recognised in the sociolinguistic literature as they signal transactional, interpersonal and deictic ramifications in human relationships (Leech, 1999). Given the situatedness of address terms, several sociolinguistic studies on address terms tend to show they are contingent on a number of factors such as socioeconomic status, age, sex, the relationship that exists between interlocutors and the domains of a communicative encounter. The present study does not intend to ignore this general direction, although it brings into the literature a speech community scarcely mentioned, the Fantes of Ghana.

In the present study, 'address terms' is distinguished from 'reference terms', taking a cue from Dickey's study (1997). Although the same linguistic form may be used for both address terms and reference terms to designate a person in a communicative encounter, there is evidence that this is not always the case (Paredes-Lorente, 2002). For instance, Ghanaian students may, in the absence of their lecturer, hilariously refer to him/her as *Butcher* but address him/her in a face-to-face interaction deferentially as *Sir/Madam*. Throughout this study, therefore, I use 'address term' to refer to the linguistic expression by which an addresser designates an addressee in a face-to-face encounter.

As well, address terms in different speech communities are likely to be different, as different languages have different linguistic resources to express what is culturally permissible and meaningful. It is also true to say that societies hardly ever remain static; modern society is highly dynamic in evincing appropriate verbal behaviour between individuals and members of various groups, and between various groups (Aceto, 2002; Sequeira, 1993). Following from these caveats, it is worth investigating the address terms used in a rural speech community in Ghana that can be said to be in transition as a way of contributing to the ever-increasing volume of literature on sociolinguistic studies of address terms from various speech communities worldwide.

Conceptual Framework

Theoretical framework

Theoretically, I draw on interactional sociolinguistics, making use of the concepts of face (Goffman, 1967) and politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to elucidate the verbal behaviour of the participants in various communicative encounters in the present study.

Although politeness theory would appear to derive from the concept of face, both sociolinguistic notions are inter-related. In this study, both concepts are utilised to describe how interactants draw on linguistic resources in a sociocultural setting to protect their own face, that is, a sense of self-image or somebody else's social face. Given that every communicative act (including address terms) is potentially face-threatening, there is the need for inter-locutors to utilise different linguistic strategies either to demonstrate and create solidarity (positive politeness) or to ensure that respect and considera-tion for the other person/s is maintained (negative politeness). As Agyekum (2004) points out, these two inter-related concepts are crucial in commu-nicative situations, given the oral nature of the traditional Akan society.

Indeed, in Ghana, as in many communalistic societies, these two interac-tional concepts (face and politeness) are mediated through five salient sociolinguistic variables: gender, rank, age, power and distance (Agyekum, 2004: 74–75). For example, interactants who wield power and are of a higher rank in a communicative situation are expected to be addressed with deferential terms. Similarly, interactants tend to be aware of the influence of age in the choice of linguistic features in addressing one another as accepted in the Akan society. This requires that the young defer to the old in using acceptable address terms to avoid social sanction.

Literature review on address terms

Studies of personal address follow from the work of Brown and Gilman (1960), who first investigated pronominal address systems in several European languages, such as *tu* and *vous* in French. Explaining the use of these pronouns, they postulated the crucial role of two factors: power and solidarity. They argued that in relations of parity interactants use the more familiar pronouns, but in asymmetrical relations the subordinate addresses the

superior with the formal pronouns; and the superior can address the subordinate using either the formal or informal pronouns. Other early studies (Brown, 1965; Brown & Ford, 1961; Ervin-Tripp, 1972) served to corroborate the perspective that all use of address forms has underlying rules that differ across contexts.

Subsequent research, while drawing upon the early studies, has faulted the power and solidarity postulate for being too deterministic in supposing a pre-existing cultural system from which verbal practices are built (Kendall, 1981; Kramer, 1975; Muhlhausler & Harre, 1990). As is now clear, studies suggest that speakers use address terms to negotiate or transform a cultural system (see Fitch, 1991; Morford, 1997). A further contribution to studies on address terms is that there exist a number of other categories of address terms (e.g. Fang & Heng, 1983; Fitch, 1991; Goodenough, 1965) and that these address forms identify and construct cultural beliefs (Evans-Pritchard, 1964; Manju-lakshi, 2004). For example, Fitch (1998) claims that there are five categories of address terms: second-person pronouns, proper names, kinship terms, titles, and nicknames and adjectival terms. She demonstrates that the kinship term, *Madre*, or mother, is used to identify and negotiate a variety of relationships among participants in Columbia (Fitch, 1991). Likewise, in China the title *tongzhi*, or comrade, reveals how a title reflects China's changing social structure (Fang & Heng, 1983; Scotton & Zhu, 1983).

Sociolinguistic studies on address terms have provided further insights into various facets of human communication. For instance, it is known that speakers use terms of address in creative and nonliteral ways such as metaphor, joking, irony and deception (Fitch, 1991). The vitality of address terms is also well acknowledged as they permeate key social institutions such as politics (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2000), religion (Dzameshie, 1997; Sequeira, 1993), the media (Edu-Buandoh, 1999) and academia (Afful, 1998; Dickey, 1997). Finally, it has been noted that in using address forms, addressers apply their own personal meaning, thus often differing from the conventional interpretation (Sequeira, 1993).

While the majority of studies on address terms have considered Anglo-American, Euro-Asian and Latin American contexts, relatively very little research has concentrated on settings in Africa. One of the earliest socio-linguistic studies conducted in Africa concerns the use of non-kinship terms among the Nuer, who live around the Nile (Evans-Pritchard, 1964). Other studies conducted on address terms in Africa include Adetugbo (1969), Dabu (19887) and a more recent study by Oyetade (1995). Like their non-African sociolinguistic studies on address terms, studies conducted in African communities confirm the sociocultural situatedness of address terms.

Taking a cue from these early sociolinguistic studies in Anglo-American, Euro-Asian contexts, and elsewhere in Africa, there is a gradual but perceptible pace of studies that have been conducted in Ghanaian communities. The emerging body of sociolinguistic studies conducted in Ghana can be categorised into two types: those on Akan (a major Ghanaian language spoken by more than 40% of the population) and those on non-Akan. The former, which is the more pertinent to the present study, include Agyekum (2003), Akrofi and Owusu-Ansah (1995) and Obeng (1997), while the latter

includes Dakubu (1981). Egblewogbe's (1987) work represents a mid-way because it treats the structure of address terms in some major speech communities, including Akan, with very little information on their socio-linguistic import.

In particular, Akrofi and Owusu-Ansah's (1995) paper draws attention to how the historical experience – colonialism – of a speech community impacts on the use of family names as address forms among the Akans of Cape Coast and Elmina (major towns along the coastal area of Ghana, where Fante, a dialect of Akan, is largely spoken). Studies by Agyekum (2003) and Obeng (1997) appear restrictive: the former explores address terms under honorifics, observing that among the Akans, apart from denoting specialised address forms used to reflect politeness, honorifics are meant to demonstrate a user's competence in language and culture, while Obeng (1997) explores a relatively under-researched aspect of Akan personal names, hypocoristic day-names. The non-Akan studies, on the other hand, pay little attention to the sociocultural conditioning of address terms as more consideration is given to their forms. Altogether, all these major studies, either tangentially or in a focused manner, show how social rank, age and gender dictate the various forms of address used in everyday encounters.

The Present Study

Aim of the study

Following from the sketch of previous studies on address terms, the primary goal of the present study is to contribute to, first, the emerging scholarship on Akan sociolinguistics by exploring the range of non-kinship address terms among the Akan people in Ghana, a former British colony, and, second, the ever increasing literature on address terms worldwide. The present study differs from previous sociolinguistic studies that have dwelt on Asante, one of the three major written Akan dialects (Obeng, 1997) by focusing on a relatively less studied Akan dialect, Fante, spoken along the South-western and central coastal parts of Ghana.

To accomplish the above goal, I now describe this Fante-speaking community, Amamoma. Thereafter, I describe the collection of data, and follow it up by discussing three key non-kinship address forms used by members of the chosen speech community in their interaction. Some implications are drawn at the end of the paper.

The setting: Amamoma

Amamoma is a small village in Cape Coast (a regional capital in Ghana), which is adjacent to a public university, University of Cape Coast (UCC), and lies on a flat plain close to the Atlantic Ocean bordering Ghana in the South. Although the residents of Amamoma are mainly subsistence farmers, due to the onset of Westernisation and modernisation in recent years, they have been experiencing changes in various aspects of their life such as economics, religion and the sociopolitical structure.

Further, an important aspect of the life of residents of Amamoma relates to their language use. Most Amamoma residents speak Fante. However, as a result of education, immigration and interaction with other groups of people, English, the official language of Ghana, and two other local languages (Twi and Ewe) are spoken in addition to Fante by residents of Amamoma.

Thus, the linguistic terrain and varied aspects of life of Amamoma residents stand to have a possible influence on the lexicon of address terms that are used.

Data

Proceeding as an empirical investigation, this study utilises two kinds of data: observation and semi-interview, with introspection as a triangulatory measure.

The primary source of data was obtained from both participant and nonparticipant observation of actual usage of address forms in 204 interactive situations over six months (September 1997–February 1998). These situations involved familial, social, occupational, religious, political and recreational domains. Observing these varied situations was followed by note-taking in order to record address terms used by interlocutors. The second source of data was obtained from semi-structured interviews administered to a representative sample of 50 citizens based on age, sex, socioeconomic status and years of stay in the community. The purpose of interviewing was to ascertain the use of address terms from the informants' viewpoint.

Further, the combination of observation and interview was supplemented by introspection aided by my being a Fante who hails from Cape Coast.

The Lexicon of Non-kinship of Address Terms

The study, part of a larger study, showed that eight categories constituted the non-kinship linguistic repertoire used addressively by Amamoma residents: personal names, titles, catch phrases (CPs), zero address forms, descriptive phrases, some attention getters, occupational terms and pronouns (see Afful, 1998). Given space constraint and the scope of the present study, an attempt is made here to describe and account for the use of three salient forms of address terms, drawing on examples from the data as well as my introspection as a Fante to facilitate the analysis and discussion.

Personal names

Different Ghanaian speech communities have different categories of personal names (e.g. Dakubu, 1981; Egblewogbe, 1987). For instance, Egblewogbe (1987) has classified names used as address forms into eight while Dakubu (1981) classifies names into three broad categories. Available evidence in this research seems to support Dakubu's classification of the personal names into three broad categories, namely, birth names, appellatives and deferential titles. As in many speech communities in Ghana and elsewhere, the birth name is considered 'real' and permanent, while other names acquired

later in life such as the appellative are considered transient, with deferential titles regarded as a prefix to the birth name.

Birth names

Although real names among Akans are varied and diverse, five kinds are mentioned in this study: family/lineage names, deferential titles, day-names, full form names, circumstantial and reincarnate names.

Among Amamoma citizens, an important source of birth names is family names or lineage names. These are often names of the early settlers in Amamoma or forbears who might have contributed immensely to the development of the community. They include male names such as *Ɔbo*, *Gyan*, *Ofosu* and *Kweegya*, and female names such as *Sama* and *Bɛtse.* In addition, personal names are drawn from a pool of general family names usually identified with Fantes. These names are used reciprocally among youths as well as adult friends and realised differently. For instance, the male family name *Abaka* among friends can be realised differently as *Abaka*, *Abek* and *Abeko*. Sometimes, friends (both females and males) addressed *Abaka* accompanied by a kinship terms as in *Wɔfa Abaka*, *Bra Abek* and *Uncle Abek* to suggest playfulness.

Apart from family or lineage names, other equally significant ones used as personal address forms are day-names. Day-names reflect a child's sex and the day on which it was born, such as *Kofi* (male born on Friday) and *Adjoa* (female born on Monday). It was observed (and confirmed in the interviews) that among the youth, to avoid addressing each other by the full name such as *Nana Kojo Abakah* or *Maame Ekua Fosuwa* (perceived as bothersome and mouthful), they preferred calling each other by day-names. Thus, the youth especially reciprocally address each other as simply *Kweku* (male born on Wednesday) or *Efua* (female born on Friday). However, in an adult–child relationship it is a mark of power for an adult who chooses to address a young person by his/her day-name without receiving one in return. It is a rarity for a younger addresser, however old, to address the parent by the day-name as this is considered a mark of disrespect and is likely to elicit a stern rebuke.

A further interesting aspect of the use of day-names used in Amamoma is what Obeng (1997: 39) calls 'Akan hypocoristic day-names'. Hypocoristic names are 'pet names, fondling endings, terms of endearment, diminutive, effeminate diminutive and familiarity markers' (Newman & Ahmad, 1994: 159). Resulting from different phonological processes such as deletion, vowel harmony, and lengthening of syllabic and phonic units, Fante hypocoristic day-names such as *Kuukuu* derived from *Kweku*, *Fiifi* derived from *Kofi* for males, on the one hand, and *Ewuraesi* derived from *Esi*, or *Ewurefua* derived from *Efua* for females, on the other hand, tend to be used among intimate friends and in the familial domain. It is, therefore, social anathema for a young person in Amamoma to address the older addressee with hypocoristic day-names. On the other hand, evidence from the fieldwork pointed to a respectable superior addressing a subordinate with a hypocoristic form, consistent with Obeng's (1997) finding. In general, however, the use of hypocoristic day-names as address forms in the study depends largely on

same age (Obeng, 1997) among both the young and old Amamoma residents, rather than mere participant relationship.

The most marked of the names used in Amamoma is the full formal name, which combines the day-name, family name/lineage name with or without a title. For example, my data showed the use of full formal names in three main situations. First, a full formal name is used in the presence of a third party, who is an elderly person, without the situation being necessarily formal. The second situation concerns the need to pay respect to the memory of the dead after whom the addressee has been named. A third reason relates to an addresser expressing intense feeling of annoyance or alarm, as illustrated in the exchange below:

1. **A:** *Papa Kwame Atta Nyarko*! Me frɛ wo no ɛtse a? (meaning, Papa Kwame Atta Nyarko, did you hear me when I called you?)
   B: Maame, mepa kyɛw manntse! (meaning, Mother, I'm sorry, I did not hear you!)

In contrast to the above situations, the full formal name is used sparingly in formal situations. For instance, a situation was captured in a church where confirmants were being called to collect their confirmation certificates, as in the following exchange involving a young reverend minister and the confirmant, who is about 60 years old.

2. **A:** *Maame Esi Kakraba Ghann*!
   B: Sɔfo, mepa kyɛw, mereba o! (Reverend Minister, I'm sorry, I am coming!)

Yet another formal context that usually yielded the full form of personal names in the present data set was in schools when the roll was being checked as in

3. **A:** *Nana Kɔbena Musa Biney*!
   B: Yes, Madam

Concerning Example 3, it is worth noting that in Ghana, as in several African or Caribbean societies (e.g. Aceto, 2002), a child is invested with at least two identities reflected in, first, the multiple names s/he is given at birth and, second, the ones s/he registers with in a school. *Nana Kɔbena Musa Biney* could, therefore, well be the 'official' formal names usually found in passports, birth certificates, diplomas, marriage certificates, etc.

Seniority names indicate the place of a child in the number of other siblings such as *Maanaan* (fourth-born), *Badu* (tenth-born), *Panyin* (older twin) and *Kakra* (younger twin). There are also names that recall memorable experiences of parents such as *Nyame bɛkyerɛ* (meaning 'God will provide') and *Obi nnyim ɔkyena* (literally, 'No one knows tomorrow'). Reincarnate names refer to contemptuous and denigratory terms given to so-called reincarnated children to stop them from going back to the land of the dead such as *Kaya* ('potter') and *Pɛtɛ* ('vulture'). Unlike family or lineage names, which could be combined with deferential terms, these denigratory names, seniority names and circumstantial names are often used without any titles by both the old and young Fante residents.

Appellatives

The most commonly used appellatives in my data involve nicknames, endearment terms, terms of solidarity and initials/alphabetisms.

Nicknames were easily exchanged among the male youths and adults. Consequently, among residents in Amamoma, one hears Fante nicknames such as *Ntenten* (Spider Web), *Otwe* (Deer), *Ntonton* (Mosquito) and *Ɔsɔfo* or *Ɔsɔ* (shortened form of *Ɔsɔfo*, meaning reverend minister). English nicknames found among young male interlocutors included *Fast*, *Ultimate* and *Super*. These foreign nicknames obviously reflect influence from either Westernism or formal education. That the use of nicknames in my data occurred among interactants of equal status, thus reflecting great intimacy, is supported by Wardhaugh (1992: 267): 'knowing and using another's first name is, of course a sign of considerable intimacy or at least of a desire for such intimacy. Using a nickname or pet name shows an even greater intimacy.'

Closely related to the use of nicknames as a mode of address were terms of solidarity, also termed as 'symmetric honorifics' (Agyekum, 2003: 379). They included *Wogyafo*, *Kɔmfo*, *Koo*, *Ogyam* and *Migyafo* (all denoting a pal), which are analogous to *Buddy*, *Dude* and *Man* (Leech, 1999: 110), reported to be predominantly used among American youth. Even among acquaintances, as I learnt in my interviews, terms of solidarity are used insofar as the ages of interlocutors are the same or not more than a difference of five in order to initiate conversation. The terms of solidarity, *Koo* and *Ogyam*, however, were constantly used among older male friends, whether educated or not. On the other hand, *Charlie* was observed to be commonly used among the young educated males who felt the need to assert their identity through identification with modernism.

Besides nicknames and terms of solidarity, another form of the appellative used addressively in Amamoma is endearment terms. These are mostly used in the familial domain. Married people could use *Me yer pa* (My good wife) or *Mo dɔfo* (My beloved) for the partner when a favour is being solicited. Educated Amamoma husbands could often use *Darling* and *Ma dea* (a form derived from 'My dear'), although the less educated males often addressed their wives by the latter. However, endearments were not limited to couples; in some educated families observed and interviewed, parents addressed their children *Sweetie* and *Honey* (for girls) and *Sonny Boy* and *Junior* (for boys). It is difficult to determine how widespread this verbal behaviour is among educated Fante residents in Amamoma, as getting access to familial domains was always not easy. It can, however, probably be argued that with the gradual urbanisation of Amamoma, this could be a sure feature among the educated families.

Deferential Titles

The deferential titles that were observed in the present study involve the following: *Papa* ('father'), *Egya* ('father'), *Nana* ('grandparent') and *Maame* ('mother'). Although primarily these appear to be kinship terms in terms of expressing a biological relationship between the addresser and the addressee, they were used in a pervasive sense to express deference to the addresser.

In fact, given that family or lineage names are names of forbears who need to be venerated in the community, they are often accompanied by the four above-mentioned deferential titles, regardless of the age difference of the interlocutors. Thus, in Amamoma, a younger addresser (either a child or an adult) who perceives that his/her addressee could be the same age as his/her parents would use these deferential forms. Also, addressers address female elderly persons in the community as either *Me na* ('my mother') or *Maame* ('mother'); the motivation of this use of differing forms is not always clear. A similar situation exists for *Papa* and *Egya.* On the other hand, *Nana* tends to be gender inclusive, as it is used for elderly addressees of both sexes, especially if they are perceived to be of similar ages as the addressers' grandparents. Although, generally, elderly people are addressed by these deferential titles, young acquaintances or family relations combine the deferential titles with personal names as in *Papa Kwaansa*, *Egya Buandoh*, *Maame Nyaneba* and *Nana Essuman* in addressing the elderly.

Given that during naming ceremonies in Akan-speaking communities a child's name is usually given as a deferential title plus day and lineage names as in *Papa Kwamena Ewool*, *Nana Kofi Amissah* and *Maame Esi Gyaabaa*, addressers are required to use such forms to demonstrate veneration for the dead whose lineage names the addressees bear. While, generally, older members of Amamoma abide by this societal norm even when addressing their children or younger interactants, the youth often dispense with this norm, preferring any other name when addressing one another. Young people only use the full form in the presence of an elderly person for fear of what Obeng (1997: 51) calls 'social rebuke'. After all, in Amamoma, these deferential terms – *Nana*, *Maame*, *Papa* and *Egya* are part of the personal names given to an individual at birth during the naming ceremony in Amamoma, as also reported among other ethnic groups in Dakubu (1981).

In general, the three categories of personal names as discussed above show different levels of frequency and use, dictated often by social indices such as social status, age, gender, nature of relationship and domains of use.

Catch phrases

CPs are modes of address that are used to express transient communicative intent such as the sharing of a common fate, the mood of the moment or the aims of a group. But there were CPs with personal orientation, ostensibly with a history shared by the interactants. The above broad categorisation of CPs in Amamoma notwithstanding, CPs often evince personal, religious, social and political orientations.

A brief structural analysis of the CP used as address forms among interlocutors in my data points to a call–response pattern, that is, an utterance is initiated by the addresser and completed, so to speak, by the addressee. This call-response pattern recalls adjacency pairs in conversation analysis in which the following features are identified: there are sequences of two utterances; produced by different speakers; ordered as a first and a second; a first requires a second; and given a first, not anything goes as a second. Further, the corresponding response could either be a repetition or a different linguistic

form of the 'call' component. Found in pairs, CPs could also exhibit traces of rhythm between the first utterance and the reply as in these exchanges between friends.

4. **Friend:** *Wɔara baba* (meaning, you would come by yourself)
   Friend: *Wɔara baba* (meaning, you would come by yourself)
5. **Friend A:** *Hwehwɛ* (Search)
   Friend B: *Na ibohu* (And you will find it)

Both Examples 4 (involving male friends) and 5 (involving female friends) are personal CPs, realised as pairs – call and response. However, they are slightly different in that whereas the former CP involves repetition of the same linguistic and semantic realisations, the latter is constitutive of one utterance broken into two different linguistic forms.

Two issues can certainly be raised about personal CPs. First, it was clear from the fieldwork that personal CPs were far more frequent among young and elderly male Fante residents in Amamoma than their female counterparts. Second, personal CPs were usually accompanied by nonverbal expressions such as snapping of fingers, shouting, hugging and gesturing. On meeting at the outskirts of the village, one may hear two male friends exchange slogans *Mummbu wo bi* ('I don't respect you') eliciting the same response (*Mummbu wo bi*) from the addressee repeatedly amidst laughter, vigorous shaking of hands and an embrace. Often restricted to the informal level, personal CPs tended to be used among friends who originated their use; sometimes other people who do not share the history of these personal CPs are fascinated them and hence start using them.

Unlike the personal one, the group CP, as its names suggests, is the property of a group (be it religious, social or political). The 'public' or 'group' CPs are often used addressively in a group on particular occasions; they can be used sometimes even when the group is not in session. One obvious effect of the use of group CPs outside meetings of the group involved is that they identify the identity of the interlocutors to a third party who is present, while at the same time excluding the third party. Moreover, sometimes using a group CP among members who are friends outside the group could make an interactive encounter assume an air of informality.

In Amamoma, group CPs were found to be important in the religious, political and social settings. For instance, it is often the case that church groups in Amamoma have their CPs together with other paraphernalia that enable the community to identify them. On church premises in Amamoma, one could constantly hear the following:

6. **A:** *Christ asɔr* (Christ has risen).
   B: *Wɔasɔr ampa* (He has risen indeed)
7. **A:** *Ayeyi nka Christ* (Praise be to Christ)
   B: *Wɔ mber a onnyi ewie* (Till eternity)
8. **A:** Hallelujah!
   B: Amen!

While this group of CPs fundamentally serves to identify the interlocutors as belonging to one family, an added function with regard to Examples 6 and 7 is that it publicises the tenets of belief of the members – the resurrection of Jesus Christ and everlasting life. Additionally, the CPs in Example 8 serve to identify

interactants as members of a Christian church, distinct from people from other religious persuasions. As in the personal CPs, these church CPs are hardly exchanged without gestures of conviviality. This usage of CPs or mottoes in churches is in tandem with similar usage in Afro-American churches as reported by Wharry (2003).

The use of CPs by Amamoma residents to address one another in the political domain offers an interesting scenario. Given the gradual entrenchment of multiparty democracy in Ghana, it is not surprising that villages such as Amamoma have their share of party politics. The proximity of Amamoma to Cape Coast, a regional capital that has in recent times been described as the 'Florida' of the 2004 elections in Ghana, ensures that Amamoma benefits from serious party politicking, which involves use of CPs from the various political parties. CPs such as those shown below, though not in Fante, but in Ga (a language spoken by the natives of the capital city of Ghana), are exchanged among political activists of the two leading political parties in Ghana:

9. **Supporter A:** *NDC* (stands for National Democratic Congress)
   Supporter B: *Ehe dzobodo* (life is comfortable)
10. **Supporter A:** *Eshie* (an earth tremor or a vigorous shaking)
    Supporter B: *Rado, rado, rado* (onomatopoeic reference to a tremor)

Ordinarily, Examples 9 and 10 are used by supporters of the largest opposition party (National Democratic Congress) and the ruling party (National Patriotic Party) respectively in Amamoma. Though it was observed that supporters of the same political party address each other through these CPs, in some cases a supporter of one party may shout out a party CP in the presence of an activist belonging to another political party. In this circumstance, apart from failing to obtain a response, the initiation of a party CP becomes adversarial, triggering a confrontation. Moreover, as in all parts of Ghana, political CPs are actively used among residents of Amamoma in an election year and more particularly during the campaigns of political parties.

Thus, the discussion above suggests that CPs represent a significant form of address in communication among Fante residents in Amamoma, contributing to sustenance of relationship. A further significant point is their tendency towards inclusivity and exclusivity with regard to group membership as well as their ideological orientation. Moreover, as has been shown, in Amamoma CPs represent a rare form of address in which gender and age play a very small role.

Attention getters: *Mepa kyɛw and Hei*

Although it can be argued that the forms of non-kinship address discussed above have an attention-getting function, two dominant formulaic expressions among Fante residents in Amamoma which basically express this communicative function emerged from my data: *Mepa kyɛw* and *Hei*.

Generally, *Mepa kyɛw* (translated literally as 'I doff my hat for you' but also means 'Please'), labelled as an 'apologetic expression' by Obeng (1999: 243), is considered the prototypical politeness marker among Fante residents in Amamoma. Right from birth, a Fante child in Amamoma is explicitly taught to make requests by preceding it with this formulaic expression. It is, therefore,

not surprising, that many of the exchanges in the present study involved the use of *Mepa kyɛw* in asymmetrical relations, with a younger interactant requesting an object or service from an older interlocutor or simply posing a question, as the following exchanges attest:

14. **A:** *Mepa kyɛw*, fa atser no me. (Please, give me the spoon)
    B: (The interlocutor, an older sibling, responds by giving the spoon to the younger addresser)
15. **A:** *Mepa kyɛw*, ehun Kofi anapa yi a? (Please, have you seen Kofi this morning?)
    B: Oho, hwɛ ne dan no mu dɛ ɔwɔ hɔ a. (No, find out whether he is in his room)

In Amamoma, the above courtesy phrase could also be used by an older person to a younger, especially when the former does not want the latter to feel a sense of imposition, as in this exchange between a mother and daughter.

16. **A:** *Mepa kyɛw*, tsen wo nsa na yi newspaper no ma me a (Please, stretch your hand to pick the newspaper for me, right?)
    B: (Child obliges).

Interestingly, older people in Amamoma are not obliged to use *Mepa kyɛw* in requestive situations. However, such usage by older people only makes it impossible for the addresser to refuse compliance, thus becoming intensely persuasive or an 'aggravator', in the words of Achiba (2003: 132). As can be seen in the above excerpts, underlying the use of *Mepa kyɛw* is the Brown and Levinson (1987) notion of negative face. In the above exchanges, the addresser is concerned with maintaining a negative politeness, that is, the addresser does not want to impede the hearer, while at the same time utilising it as an 'aggravator'.

It should be noted that there were other usages of *Mepa kyɛw* in nonfamilial contexts, such as shown below.

17. **Pupil:** *Mepa kyɛw*, wɔabɔ ahen? (Please, what is the time?).
    Elder: Wɔabɔ 12 o'clock. (It's 12 o'clock)
18. **Customer:** *Mepa kyɛw*, m'atar no apam ewie a? (Please, have you finished sewing my dress?)
    Seamstress: Mowie sisera. (I'll finish very soon).

The first exchange occurred between a pupil on the way to school and a resident, while the second occurred between an older seamstress and her younger client. Unlike in the previous utterances, *Mepa kyɛw* occurs in questions in Examples 17 and 18. A more important point is that this apologetic expression doubly serves as an attention getter and a politeness marker for an addresser who seeks to know the time from his/her interlocutor. This above usage suggests the tendency for Amamoma residents to precede questions with the politeness marker, *Mepa kyɛw*, based on disparity in social status and age.

In contrast to the courtesy phrase *Mepa kyɛw* was another formulaic expression, *Hei*, which is largely considered as an unacceptable attention getter by Fante residents in Amamoma. Mildly put, residents in Amamoma regard *Hei* as depersonalising, and worse still dehumanising, as it is felt among both the young and old people that it is used when one wants to drive

away an animal. Interestingly, it was sometimes used among the youth to express surprise, while initiating discourse, as in:

    19. **A:** *Hei*, muhunn wo akyɛr papa. Itu kwan ana? (Hey, it's a long time since I last saw you. Did you travel?).

        B: Hmm! Minya eyi o (I was bereaved o).

Further evidence from the fieldwork showed that *Hei* is considered acceptable when elderly persons use it for children who are misbehaving, to express surprise and initiate reprimand.

Thus, the use of these two formulaic expressions – *Mepa kyɛw* and *Hei* – primarily served as address terms to initiate discourse. Further, the use of the former as a hedge to mitigate the impositive force of request events is in tandem with Obeng's (1999) finding. Moreover, the two formulaic expressions are different in their semantic significations because the former is generally accepted in the community in fostering politeness in the society while the latter is frowned on as impolite and depersonalising but admissible in a rebuke.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the repertoire of non-kinship address terms found in a rural community in Ghana, Amamoma, together with the factors that explain their differing uses.

Specifically, three categories of non-kinship expressions were found to be fundamental to the way residents of Amamoma address one another: personal names, CPs and some attention getters. The use of non-kinship Fante address forms in Amamoma is consistent with key theoretical positions and notions such as face and politeness that inform sociolinguistic studies. For example, in the use of address terms, Fante residents in Amamoma adapt their language to the diverse sociolinguistic contexts based on factors such as participant status/role, setting, purpose, etc. in order to ensure effective and actual communication. Further, like many speech communities in transition, the use of address terms among Fante residents in Amamoma reflects the influence of Westernism, especially in the use of personal names. Amamoma residents shuffle between endogenous (indigenous) and exogenous (foreign) languages when confronted with the choice of appropriate linguistic forms in various communicative situations.

The significance of these findings from the present study is that they enable an understanding of the address terms used by the Fante-speaking community of Amamoma as one way of fostering effective intercultural communication with the residents. This is even more important given that in recent years Amamoma has been hosting both students from various parts of Ghana and other international students who have no accommodation on the university campus. Besides, the above findings point to the need for further research, given that there is no extensive body of secondary literature on address terms in Ghana to review. Further research can be conducted to offer a more substantive picture of the extent of influence of urbanism on the use of address terms among one major group of people in Ghana.

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