Address Forms and Variation Among University Students in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Since Brown and Gilman's (1960) study, sociolinguists have shown an increasing interest in the use of address forms in various social domains such as politics, workplace, religion, and acdemia. This study shows how students in a Ghanaian university address one another in varied linguistic forms. To accomplish this task, a three-pronged conceptual framework derived from interactional sociolinguistics and an ethnographic-style research design are adopted. Three key findings emerged from the study. The first finding concerns personal name, descriptive phase, and title as key naming practices among students. Second, constrained by socio-cultural and other situational factors, students draw on these naming practices to address an interlocutor. The third point relates to the display of innovativeness and playfulness in the variation of address forms used in, especially, spontaneous interactions. These findings have implications for variationist theory, intercultural communication, and future research on address forms.

Keywords: address forms, ethnographic-style, students, university, variation

INTRODUCTION

Studies on address forms continue to engage the attention of researchers in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, ethnography of communication, and pragmatics. This is not surprising, given the fact that they (address forms) offer a useful means of understanding the values, norms, and practices of different societies (e.g. Dakubu, 1981; Fang and Heng, 1983; Fitch, 1991). Also, address forms represent very fundamental means of forging human interaction, thus performing an interpersonal role. A less useful but noteworthy reason that accounts for the burgeoning research on address forms may be the relative ease in its methodological procedures. Besides, it is worth noting that the sociolinguistic studies on address forms that have been conducted from a variationist point of view (e.g. Brown and Gilman, 1960; Brown and Ford, 1961; Dakubu, 1981; Fitch, 1991) have often focused on different socio-cultural settings.

The present study is a continuation of this variationist perspective. However, unlike most of the previous major studies, this study focuses on an English-medium university in order to shed light in three ways. First, with the increase in sociolinguistic research on the use of language among the youth in educational

institutions (e.g. Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003; Salami, 2006), this study seeks to throw light on the use of address terms among highly educated youths in a post-colonial contemporary society. In fact, the interest that this research holds lies in the fact that the group being investigated here has rarely been featured in previous sociolinguistic studies on address terms. The present study could also foster cross-cultural communication between Ghanaians and the increasing number of foreigners, including students, who come to Ghana for academic, cultural, and touristic reasons. Finally, it will contribute to the burgeoning literature on variationist sociolinguistics.

At the outset, it should be noted that I use "address term" in this work to refer to an expression used in a face-to-face situation to designate an addressee (Oyetade, 1995), given that, as Dickey (1997) points out, a term that is used for an addressee in a dyadic encounter may not necessarily be the same as the one used in the absence of the same addressee. In what follows, I introduce the conceptual framework of the paper, focusing on key notions and the relevant literature. Thereafter, I describe the research design, followed by a discussion of the findings. The findings are then interpreted in terms of their implications in the concluding section.

1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

1.1 KEY NOTIONS

I draw mainly on a three-pronged framework derived from interactional sociolinguistics: social constructionism, community of practice, and variation. Social constructionism debunks the notion of the inner dynamics of the individual psyche (romanticism and subjectivism), or the already determined characteristics of the external world (modernism and objectivism), and foregrounds the continuous interaction between human beings, what Shotter (1993: 10) calls "self-other dimension" of interaction. From within this flow of relational activities and practices, constructionists maintain that all other socially significant dimensions of interpersonal interaction among all persons – with their associated modes of being (either subjective or objective) originate and are formed. Through various interactions, students make and remake their own social worlds, utilizing various verbal behaviours, including address terms; but they are also themselves made and remade by them in the process, thus evidencing a sort of dialectical emphasis upon both the contingency and the creativity of humans.

Interaction finds a more spatio-temporal dimension in the second key concept in this study – "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This term has overtaken two other terms namely "discourse community" and "speech community" though they may not be markedly different from one another. The popularity of the term "community of practice" may stem from the much cited

research on language and gender by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998, 1999). In their work, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998: 490) contend that a community of practice is:

> an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour. Ways of doings, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavour.

Indeed, besides the fact that university students constitute a homogeneous group in terms of their obvious rationale in desiring to be members of the university – to learn, thus assuming peripheral participation in academia – they are likely to be involved in a "joint negotiated enterprise; and a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time" (Wenger, 1998: 76). That is, students are likely to develop linguistic resources (here, a lexicon of address terms) which will distinguish them from other members of the university community – faculty and non-academic staff.

The last concept central to the present study is "variation". Unlike early variationist sociolinguists such as Labov (1966), Trudgill (1972), and Milroy (1987), who consider variation from the standpoint of the varieties of a "standard" language, I follow Dickey (1997) in using the term "variation" to mean either "different" or "changing". In other words, this study considers "variation" as different tokens of a human referent, as argued by Dickey's (1997: 259) in her understanding of variation in the study of address forms:

> The number of different ways in which a person can be referred to are virtually infinite. It would be ridiculous to attempt to decide how a given person is 'normally' referred to, just as it would be pointless to try to find the 'normal' way in which that person is addressed. Both address and reference vary according to the speaker's relationship to the addressee or person referred to

Granted Dickey's stance, this paper argues that students consistently vary their use of the address forms for an addressee, depending on socio-cultural, historical, and other situational factors.

In sum, the above notions allow us to see how university students in a spatio-temporal context vary the use of address forms for an interlocutor by drawing on existing linguistic rules within their community of practice, their imagination, and their play in different interactive encounters.

1.2 PAST STUDIES ON VERBAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG STUDENTS

At issue here is the meaning of the word, "students". I consider "students" first as persons who have an initial contact with formal education, in the high school,

and only narrowly as those with university education, thus differing from Staton's (1993) more inclusive view. As early as the 1960s and the 1970s, studies were conducted to establish the percentage of profanity and swear words in the informal speech of college students (e.g. Nerbonne and Hipkin, 1972; Kutner and Brognan, 1974). A key finding in these early studies was that swear words usage could be found among different age groups or generation, while varying stylistically. In a more recent study, Salami (2006) examines the relationship between the use and attitude of Nigerian university students towards six selected English taboo words on the one hand and gender and religion on the other hand. The study concluded that while the gender of a speaker is important in the use and attitudes to English taboo words, religion makes no significant contribution.

Still, from the perspective of variation, studies have investigated the possible influence of gender on students' verbal behaviour. In particular, Aries' (1976) study of conversations, referred to by Eckert (1993), and involving undergraduates in same-gender groups, showed that the female undergraduates "talked about themselves, their personal feelings, and their relationship", while the male undergraduates engaged in "competitive conversations comparing knowledge and experience and recounting competitive exploits" (Eckert, 1993: 33). Also interested in the influence of gender on language use among students in a classroom interaction, Brooks (1982) found that male exhibited significantly more aggressiveness (interruptive behaviour) than female students in both male and female professors' classes, although male aggressiveness occurred in female professors' classes than in male professors' classes. Kiesling's (1997) research on verbal practice in an American college fraternity also showed that joking and insults are commonly used by male students to enforce heterosexuality.

Interestingly, despite all the above studies on the general verbal behaviour of students in and outside university classrooms, those on address forms have only recently begun to receive due attention, much less its relationship with variation. It would appear then that the most pertinent studies to the present study are Dickey (1997), Li (1997), and Wong and Leung (2004). Specifically, Dickey's (1997) study explores the disjuncture between address forms and reference terms in relation to an interlocutor in both academic and familial interactions. Her finding that students use nicknames, first name (FN), and last name (LN) in informal contexts on the one hand and title plus last name (TLN) in relatively formal contexts on the other hand anticipates findings in the present study. As well, through detailed interviews and questionnaires administered to undergraduates in Hong Kong, Wong and Leung (2004) found that although addressing each other in Chinese is more common than in the past, students' varied their use of English address forms according to the field of study, the culture of a secondary school, and peer group pressure. Li's (1997) study further identifies the shifting and varying bicultural identities (that is, from the West and their indigenous setting) adopted by Hongkongers, including university students.

As can be seen, the above variationist studies have largely been conducted in Anglo-American and Asian contexts. But there are notable studies that have emerged from the Sub-Saharan African context such as De Klerk and Bosch (1997, 1999) Afful (1998, 2006), Crozier and Dimmock (1999), and Kajee (2005). For instance, Crozier and Dimmock (1999) and De Klerk and Bosch (1997, 1999) deal with different sets of nicknames among students, flagging the issue of variation. Afful's (1998, 2001) interesting studies highlight the socio-pragmatic factors that underpin the use of address forms by three speech communities, including university students, drawing on a lexicon of eight address forms. A follow-up of the earlier study, Afful (2006) identifies four key address forms used by university students. Though Kajee's (2005) work conducted among undergraduate students in a South African university deals with an online discussion within a foundation course, rather than a face-to-face interaction, it is useful, given the point it makes about the influence of formality on the varying use of address forms by students in creating their "virtual identity".

Thus, the emerging literature on students' use of address in both African and non-African contexts is not only heartening but insightful. However, there seems to be no systematic study on the varied address forms used for an interlocutor (student) in Sub Saharan Africa.

2. CURRENT RESEARCH

2.1 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Given the review of the two strands of studies on the verbal behaviour of students, this study attempts to explore variation in the use of address forms The following questions have been formulated to guide the present research:

1. What key naming practices are found among students in a Ghanaian university community?
2. What accounts for the differences in the varied address forms used for an interlocutor among Ghanaian university students?

The first research question is important, given that students' use of address terms is likely to be drawn from the naming practices operative in a socio-cultural setting. On the other hand, by focusing on the second research question, I wish to not only investigate the varied forms students use for an interlocutor but also highlight the kind of interactional goals that are achieved.

2.2 EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Out of five public universities and a growing number of private tertiary institutions in Ghana, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) was chosen as the setting for this study. A public university originally established to train teachers for the country's secondary schools and training colleges, UCC is an English-medium university that conducts its teaching, learning, and research through four faculties (Education, Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences), enabling the university to provide several academic programmes to nearly 15, 000 local and international students. I selected UCC because of my familiarity with its members, made up of students, faculty, and non-academic staff, having spent eight years as a student (undergraduate and postgraduate) and three years as a faculty member. In this paper, as suggested earlier, my interest lies with students from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds in Ghana and who were studying for a range of qualifications, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. I focus on Ghanaian students, leaving the few international students who may have some "alien" verbal practices.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data upon which the study is based were derived from observation of both spontaneous and deliberative spoken discourse as well as interviews of university students.

The first set of data were obtained from both participant and non-participant observation of actual usage of address terms in 256 dyadic situations at two different periods on the university campus: first, June-December, 1998; and second, December-April, 2003. Observation took place at various sites on the campus of UCC such as lecture theatres, cafeteria, taxi stations, residential halls, Junior Common Rooms (JCRs), and departmental offices. Interviews in English, semi-structured, audio-taped, and ranged in length from thirty minutes to one hour, were administered to fifty Ghanaian students on a one-on-one basis within the two mentioned periods in my office, the participants' residential halls, or any convenient place on the basis of mutual agreement. The primary goal in the interview was to uncover "local" meaning from the participants' point of view (Geertz, 1973) concerning the use of address forms.

Following the data collection, the analysis involved the following procedures: a) coding the observation which had been recorded in field notes and noting emerging patterns, and b) transcribing interviews and coding the observation and interview data for themes and patterns. There was the need for assistance in coding the interview data, though I had collected data from the observation and interview all alone. I first transcribed the interview and later asked a research assistant to check for accuracy, with periodic consultations with the research assistant on emerging themes. Further consultations were made

with a selected number of interviewees to check on the interpretation behind the use of address forms. It is worth noting that while there was no need for consent in observing students' verbal behaviour, I had to assure the interviewees of anonymity and confidentiality regarding the use of the data.

3. NAMING PRACTICES AMONG STUDENTS IN GHANA

From the data, it became evident that the key naming practices among students at UCC comprised personal name, descriptive phrase, and title. (See Afful, 2006 for a full discussion.) These are briefly discussed as a precursor to the second part which deals with the issue of variation.

3.1 PERSONAL NAMES

Personal names represent the most prolific address form identified in the present study. They were made up of primary names and secondary names. The former or what Aceto (2002: 594) calls "true names" are acquired at birth through a culturally accepted arrangement. They often remain with a person though they can be changed either through a new status acquired by marriage, or other circumstances. A secondary name or, as termed "appellative" elsewhere (Afful, 2006), is acquired by an individual as s/he grows. Such a name can be given by family members, friends, neighbours or acquaintances in school, church, community, workplace, etc.

Primary names consisted of mainly first names (FNs), some of which were specifically realized as hypocoristic names (these are day-names which reflect the gender of the bearer or addressee and employ reduplication in their phonetic realization) such as *Kuuku* (name for a male person born on Wednesday) and *Kuukuwa* (name for a female born on Wednesday); English first names, whether as full form such as *Magnus*, *Joseph, Marjorie, Elizabeth* or diminutive forms such as *Gina* (for *Georgina*), *Willy* (for *William*); last names (LNs), whether English/anglicized such as *Whyte*, *Firth, Rockson, Myers* and Brown or local lineage name such as *Ghartey-Tagoe, Kplego*, or *Arbuah*, or *Fosuwa* (female) or Fosu (male), or combination of FNs and LNs such as *Linda Fobi*, *Josephine Arkorful*, and *Jonathan Mahama.*

It is worth noting that out of this pool of personal names in Ghana most individuals (including students) usually have two names: first, "a house name" by which they are known in the community, similar to what obtains in Anglophone Caribbean speech communities in Latin America (Aceto, 2002) and, second, what for lack of appropriate term I would call "institutionalized name". Whereas, the former name tends to be used at home among family and extended family members as well as neighbours, the latter name, which is a cluster of names comprises a combination of endogenous and exogenous FNs

and Anglophone/anglicized, Islamized, or lineage LNs and meant to be used in documents such as birth certificate, passport, and baptism certificate for various uses in public institutions such as banks, schools, and church.

On the other hand, there were a range of secondary names. These were commonly instantiated in my data as nicknames (e.g. *Acquahman, John Lyons, Poco a Poco* ('little by little')*, Otwe* ('deer), and *Mosquito*) endearment terms (e.g. *Darling, Honey, Sweetheart, Sweetie*), terms of solidarity (e.g. *Azei, Paddy, Charlie, Komfo, Buddy*), and Romanized initials/alphabetisms (e.g. *J.Y* for Johan Yaw, *T.A.* for Teaching Assistant). In contrast to the primary names, secondary names are used among peers either as a source of teasing or a reflection of closeness, collegiality, and solidarity.

3.2 DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES

An interesting address form at UCC, descriptive phrase (DP) constitutes the second most frequently used address form. As the name indicates, a DP is not a "real name" (Aceto, 2002); instead, it provides a description of an addressee to enable him/her to know that s/he is being addressed, thus fundamentally functioning as either an attention getter or an identifier. Four groups of DP were identified.

The first group refers to those often restricted to the halls of residence (e.g. *Room, Mate, Room mate, Room 125, Next door, J.C.R. mate, Next door, Sosu mate, Adehye Mate, Atlantic Mate*). The obvious point to note from these DPs is that they are used where the interactants share a room, a floor, a JCR, or attend the same lecture organized by a lecturer, 'Sosu' or reside in the same hall. The second group of DPs tends to be used in lecture theatres during student discussions and ranges from simple noun phrases such as *Gentleman* to the more complex ones such as *The lady in the corner*, and *The gentleman sitting very close to the bespectacled lady*. The third sub-group of DPs is most interesting because it involves some apparent denigratory terms such as *Foolish Man, Crazy Man, Stupid Boy*, and *Kwasea* ('Silly') *Boy*. The last group of DPs comprises linguistic forms reflecting the addressee's status as an alumnus of a pre-tertiary educational institution either in general terms such as *Old Boy, Old Girl,* and *School Mate* or in specific terms such as *Achimota Mate,* and *Fijai Mate*. From these two groups of address forms (personal names and descriptive phrases), we now turn to the last, titles.

3.3 TITLES

Admittedly, in many societies or speech communities, the sense of achievement or social status is inscribed in titles, thus recalling Gilman and Brown's (1961) power semantics. Surprisingly, university students in Ghana utilize them. My

data set revealed that these titles were of two categories: western-oriented and non-western.

The western ones consisted of established academic titles and non-academic titles, while the non-western ones comprised those used before the emergence of western education in Ghana. Often in lecture theatres, residential halls, student forums, and JCRs, western-oriented titles are used. Students very easily exchange academic-oriented titles such as *Vice-Chancellor, Professor, Prof, Doctor*, with their Romanized initials/aphabetisms or diminutive forms such as *VC, Prof'*, and *Doc* respectively. Students also used non-academic titles such as *Pastor*, *Reverend*, *Reverend Father*, *Rev, Chairperson, Mr, Miss, Mrs, Mr Electoral Commission*, and *Madam.* A less frequently occurring type of titles was the non-western titles used among students such as *Alhaji* (a male who has undertaken a pilgrimage to Mecca) *Sheik* ('teacher' or 'learned person' in Islam) *, ɔkyerɛ kyerɛ nyi* ('teacher'), *Ebusuapanyin* ('head of a family clan')*, Nana* (a title for grandfather, or a title for a chief, or simply a deferential title*, and ɔhembaa* ('queenmother'), *Owura* ('Lord'), *Opanyin* ('Elder'), *Daavi*, *Togbe,* among others). As can be seen, these non-western titles reflect the social structure of the Ghanaian society before the onset of colonialism (and for that matter Christianity) and Islam.

4. ADDRESS FORMS AND VARIATION

I now move to a more interpretative account of how students draw on the above-mentioned key naming practices to address a student-interlocutor. This is discussed by drawing attention to two main interactions: deliberative and spontaneous.

4.1 ADDRESS FORMS IN DELIBERATIVE INTERACTION

An interaction among students is taken to be deliberative (or academic) if the purpose is for learning and discussing academic topics, lectures, assignment, projects, and tutorials. The setting is irrelevant, although in the present study, often an academic task was performed in the lecture theatre or venues agreed on by the students.

Deliberative interaction provided a rich source of data on the variation of address forms used among students, as the ensuing examples show. During lectures, not surprisingly, students hardly addressed one another by nicknames such as *Otwe* ('deer'), *Kwasea Boy*, *Kabila,* and *Gelle*. Instead, an interaction such as indicated below typically occurs:

1. A: *John*, can I have the question at the end of the class? My pen would not write.

   B: No problem!

It could be that to signal the seriousness of the issue being discussed, the addresser in Example 1 chose to use the full form. In the same lecture theatre, when the lecturer set the Science students work, a friend calls 'John Teye', as *J.T*:

2. A: *J.T*, did you get it right?
   B: Ehm, I haven't actually finished. Just give me a few minutes, okay?

From these two different examples, it would appear that although the interactants are mates offering the same course, the kind of relationship and the purpose of the exchange serve to explain the use of *John* and *J.T* for the same addresser.

In another scene, this time in a study group, I observed various address terms used for one student, 'Kobena Atta Wie-Addow', the leader of the discussion group, as I later learnt. Example 3 illustrates the exchange prior to the start of a group discussion:

3. A: Good afternoon. Good to see you here for the discussion on the project! Thank you for coming. By the way, is everybody here now?
   B: Ahm, *Reverend*, Emmanuel Owusu is not here. He asked me to ask permission for him. I suppose, he will be late for a few minutes.
   A: Okay, *Betty*. Any information on Regina? Is she coming or not?
   C: Yeah, *Sofo*. She's always here early. I met her a couple of minutes ago. So she should be on her way by now, *Rev*.

The above interaction is interesting, given the varied address terms used. Although the team members certainly know the name of the leader – 'Kobena Atta Wie-Addow' – different terms such as *Reverend* (minister of religion), *Rev* (a diminutive form of *Reverend),* and *Sofo* (Akan word for minister of religion) are used by the interactants. The team leader himself points to a member in the team as *Betty,* although I had heard others call her *Lizzy* and *Elizabeth* instead of the full name, 'Elizabeth Essien'. While the address forms used to designate the team leader denote his actual role as a minister in a particular Christian church, it is interesting that they are used in an academic domain. This could mean that the group leader's primary name has been supplanted by his secondary name, which has become more popular. On the other hand, the varying use of *Rev* (in English) and *Sofo* (in Akan) could indicate collegiality.

A further interesting, but marked, use of address forms among students was noted in lecture theatres in the presence of lecturers. Where a student has endeared himself/herself to the class and earned a lecturer's recommendation, students could be heard hilariously screaming *TA, Doctor,* or *Professor*. As well, in future classes, if there is a problem to solve, one would hear colleagues asking a mate to provide the answer. A typical situation is captured here:

4. A: Okay, I hope we've all read Chapter 6 of 'So Long a Letter'. So let's have a volunteer to start the discussion on feminism… (Lecturer waits for a few seconds). Anyone to comment on the theme of feminism?

   B: (A group of students beckoning to a student by name 'Enoch Twum', amid whispering) *Prof! Prof! Prof!* (There is a pause.) *Enoch*, don't disgrace us.

In my data such address forms tended to be identified with both male and female students who demonstrate flashes of brilliance. From Example 4, it is worth pointing out that the two different terms of address for the referent seem to suggest different moods – first excitement, and second fear of disappointment and a plea.

   Closely allied to the use of such Romanized initials/alphabetisms (e.g. *T.A.*) or academic titles (e.g. *Professor, Doctor*, with their diminutive forms, *Prof* and *Doc*) as varying address forms were names such as *Jane Ure*, *Plato, Noam Chomsky, John Lyons, Gimson, Herodotus, Karl Marx*, and *Weber*. These are well known figures in Register Studies, Philosophy, Syntax, Semantics, Phonetics, History, Political Science, and Sociology respectively. For instance, instead of usually addressing 'Dora Manford' as *Dora*, *Jane Ure* was used to persuade the addressee to proffer her contribution in discussions; this address term constructs her as an expert in Register Studies. Similarly, in the same group of students, 'Joshua Sekyi-Badu' is addressed by his mates in a Phonology course as *Ladefoged*, a renowned phonetician. As I also found out in the data collection process, different course mates address 'Rebecca Ama Ainoo', as either *Ama*, *Rebecca*, or *Becky*, and never *Ainoo*. This is primarily dictated by the closeness of relationship between the interactants. Thus, the indigenous FN or Anglophone FN was used for an addressee, as in UCC female students are hardly called by their last names. Moreover, typical of many female students in UCC, Rebecca Ama Ainoo pointed out that she is often addressed as *Sweetie* or *Hony*, when her female mates require a favour from her, thus recalling Wolfson and Manes (1990) and Dickey (1997).

   In general, the varied address forms used for an addressee in deliberative/academic interactions depend on contextual factors, the purpose of exchange, and mood. As is evident, these varied address terms evince sobriety, decorum, deference, collegiality, with titles and "academic-oriented" nicknames suggesting an admixture of playfulness and creativity.

4.2 ADDRESS FORMS IN SPONTANEOUS INTERACTIONS

An interaction among students is taken to be non-academic if it is meant for phatic purposes or socialization as in conversations, gossip, and similar verbal exchanges. The key settings covered in the study included JCRs, cafeteria, bus stations, corridors in front of the library, departmental offices, parks, and pathways. Of course, sometimes non-academic interactions occurred in lecture theatres. As in Section 4.2.1, I illustrate the varied linguistic resources students draw on to address an addressee.

From the data set, Emmanuel Lartey, who is the president of a Hall in UCC is often addressed as *Hall President* and sometimes *Hall P* as captured in the following:

5. A: Good afternoon, *Hall President*, I have come to see you!

B: I hope you are not coming to me with that issue again. Anyway, what's the matter, *my dear*?

A: Not really, except that, *Hall P*, you remember the last time we met to deal with the issue, you asked my room mate to…

B: Honestly, *Lizzy*, you've got to take it easy.

Still, while acknowledging his official status and their friendship, other students of the residential hall address him as *Hall P*, thus alphabetizing the word 'President'. It appears that when students in the hall needed the assistance of 'Emmanuel Lartey' in his official capacity to deal with a problem, they referred to his position. Interestingly, although Emmanuel Lartey is a young third-year undergraduate student, "mature" students, who were usually older than students admitted in the university through the regular stream addressed him as *Mr. Lartey* to express deference. It is possible that the title *Hall President* or *Hall P* had become so popular that many students did not know or simply declined to use the full name of the addressee, 'Emmanuel Lartey'. By addressing the female student as *my dear,* the hall president indicates his preparedness to help and, more important, to placate the angry complainant. The use of *Lizzy* also suggests familiarity between the two interactants.

In the halls of residence, it was common to find students use descriptive phrases (DPs). Examples 6 and 7 illustrate their use:

6. A: Room 125! Room 125! Room 125! A call for you!

B: Yeees! Who dey call? (meaning yes, who is calling)

C: You get call! (You've got a call.)

7. A: (Knocking and screaming) Sosu Mate! Sosu Mate! It's time for the lecture

B: Give me some five minutes.

A: You better attend this lecture! Sosu will organize a quiz because of you o!

Interestingly, I found that *Room 125* and *Sosu mate* referred to the same person, 'Richard Donkor'. In Example 6, the addresser, who was a few meters away from the addressee but close to the telephone booth in the residential hall takes upon herself the responsibility to inform a friend in Room 125 to respond to the call, whereas in Example 7, the same person is addressed as *Sosu Mate* by a friend with whom they attend the same lecture conducted by Mr. Sosu, a lecturer in French. While the address forms in these examples express collegiality and camaraderie, Example 8 illustrates the use of the denigratory form of DPs among two friends, 'Solomon Mensah' and 'Kenneth Kweku Danso-Mensah':

8. A: *Kwasea Boy* (meaning *Foolish Boy)*, you dey! (Are you in?)
   B: I dey like I no dey (Yes, I am in!) *Foolish Man.*

In an interview, the interactants indicated that they only exchanged such address forms when excited or angry with each other; otherwise they usually exchanged Solo (the diminutive form of 'Solomon') and Ken (shortened form for 'Kenneth'). In another interview some friends of the addressee in Example 8 intimated that they often used the term, KK as a carry-over from their secondary school days, thus suggesting closeness based on a historical link.

My data set also reveals a male student whose 'institutional name' is Emmanuel Abakah was variously addressed as *Mr. Abakah, Emmanuel Abakah, Emma, Abakah, Kabila, Charlie, Azei, Ogyam*, and *Atwer* (frog)*,* by different friends in descending order of formality, that is formal to intimate. This, of course, depended on varying situational factors – mood, purpose of discourse, and nature of relationship. Typical of several young male students whose interactions I observed, Desmond Appiah and Isaac Botwe would on meeting each other either at a bus station or on the street initiate discourse by shouting amid snapping of fingers:

9. A: *Kabila*!
   B: *Charlie!*
   A: I see you che o!(It's a long time since I last saw you)
   B: Hm! Some malaria floor me small o. (I was rendered helpless by malaria).

The above exchange shows that *Kabila* (the reference to a former leader of Congo) is non-reciprocally used.

Rarely did students use the full form of names (that is, first name and last name), as presented below:

10. A: *Akosua Frema Agyapong*, you don't mean it!
    B: Well, if you don't' believe it, that's your problem.

The full form in Example 10 indicates a heightened feeling, which is not present in either *Akosua* or *Frema*, the address forms frequently used by the addressee's friends, as I learnt later. At this point, it is worth going back to 'Dora Manford' and 'Kobena Atta Wie-Addow', mentioned earlier. In particular, especially encouraged by the absence of a third party, 'Dora Manford' is addressed as *Kwegyirba*, her "house name", which also suggests a greater degree of familiarity between the interactants. Given that the addressee 'Manford' has two FNs – Dora and Priscilla – the addresser's use of the less frequently used *Priscilla* might signal a more "serious" tone of the topic to be discussed. It is also possible that the less frequent use of *Priscilla* is due to it being more mouthful than *Dora,* as explained by some interviewees who happened to be friends of Dora Priscilla Manford. On the other hand, Kobena Atta Wie-Addow is addressed by close friends as *KAWA*. Apart from being convenient, *KAWA*

was considered "cool" by the interviewees, similar to the reason white American male students give for the use of *Dude* (Kiesling, 1998).

Also featuring prominently in spontaneous /non-academic interactions were honorific titles such as *Your Worship*, *Your Excellency*, and *Your Lordship*. These were used reciprocally to humour one another amid overtures of obeisance such as bowing and softening of voice (Afful, 2006). This was especially noticeable in short periods of socialization just before the commencement of lectures. Further, it was used in requestive situations as shown below:

11. A: *Your Excellency*, can I glance through your newspaper for a few minutes?
    B: Sure, *Your Lordship*!

Interestingly in the same lecture theatre, as the students wait for the lecturer, a friend asks for the same newspaper:

12. A: *Charlie!* Where dey the newspaper (where is the newspaper?)
    B: Someone is reading it. Why?

Thus, the varying address terms – *Your Excellency* and *Charlie* – for the same addressee reflect different moods at play. A second point will be that the use of the former is strategic, to elicit a favourable response from the addressee. But it could also reflect differences in the nature of relationship.

As shown in the above discussion, the extent of variation of the address forms for an interlocutor is greater in spontaneous interactions than in deliberative interactions (see also Afful, 2002). In addition, the use of address forms such as honorific titles and denigratory descriptive phrases reflects greater element of playfulness and creativity.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The paper has explored the link between address forms and variation in respect of an interlocutor. The analysis of the data indicates, first, that students generally use three key naming practices on campus. Second, besides the academic setting, socio-cultural factors such as gender mood, domain, purpose of discourse, presence or absence of a third person (usually a lecturer), and relationship of interactants influence the use of varied address forms for an addressee, similar to the finding by Dickey (1997), Li (1997), and Wong and Leung (2004). Third, in general, the varied address forms for a student-interlocutor at UCC underscore students' innovativeness and playfulness, a finding that finds support in Oyetade's (1995) work.

These findings make an important contribution to variationist studies on address forms among university students. Dickey (1997) had indicated that the address terms and reference terms for one person were likely to be different.

This present study builds on this observation by providing an empirical basis. Moreover, by using data from a different provenance (here, Sub-Saharan Africa), the present study suggests the universal implication of such an observation. Further, it would be interesting if future research is conducted to show how students in other English-medium universities in the same country, Ghana and elsewhere, or in non-English medium educational institutions vary their address forms for an interlocutor. The present study had considered one variable, formality (as evidenced in the terms 'deliberative' and 'spontaneous'). In this regard, further study could consider the extent to which other variables such as age, religion, and gender individually or collectively (as done by Salami, 2006) impact on the use of address forms in order to enrich the existing literature on variationist approaches to the study of address forms among students.

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