

SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE USE OF HONORIFICS AMONG HAUSA-ENGLISH BILINGUALS IN ZAMFARA STATE

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Abstract

This study was informed by the desire to carry out a sociolinguistic investigation into the use of honorifics among Hausa-English bilinguals in Zamfara State. To be able to achieve this broad aim, the study set out to: investigate the use of honorifics as forms of address in Hausa land and to examine the sociolinguistic implications of the use of honorifics among Hausa-English bilinguals. The research gap was identified which this study filled up. While the study was anchored on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. Data for the research was collated from four (4) sampled local government areas in Zamfara State using the participant observation method of data collection. Forty (40) honorifics that formed the corpus for the study were presented, analysed and interpreted using Brown and Levinson's theory. The findings show that the use of honorifics has far-reaching social implications for Hausa-English bilinguals as they are used to show respect, maintain social harmony and cohesion and enhance politeness in communication.

Key Words: Sociolinguistic, investigation, honorifics, bi-lingual, implications

Introduction

In the Hausa speech community, there are considerable differences in the conventions governing the application of intimate

forms in languages and in the matters of distance and nearness which are based on class, wealth, familiarity etc. or kinship relationship (filial, matrimonial etc.) Status (servant, master, etc.) and age (younger, older etc.) (Madak, 107). Honorifics or honorific markers also symbolize a man's social position to the people around them, so that by the use of one or the other of them, the status of the speaker to the person addressed is recognized. Furthermore, the general analysis of the functions of honorifics within a community helps to bridge the gap between the description of language and the description of behaviour which includes speech or language in terms of ecology, personality, social structure, and religion. In any general analysis of communication and action, speech is but one mode among many, and the degree way and manner in which it is used varies among groups and individuals because there exist significant differences within a single society. The value attached to speech is required in the definition and evaluation of groups and roles and how much speech enters into socialization. Honorific terms also involve respect paid to a person; their worth or achievement; high moral conduct and good reputation. Through the use of honorifics, social position is also recognized which provides the verbal barometer of a given society. The importance of honorifics in Hausa society can be summarized as follows: - The honorifics of social situations/institutions, the honorifics of family and societal relationships and the honorifics of sex indication.

In simple terms, honorifics are words or word forms that express a speaker's respect for the hearer(s) or referent(s). Honorifics also indicate the social status of people involved in a discourse. Honorifics such as 'Mr' and 'Mrs' and 'Ms' indicate the mental status of individuals. Honorifics can also denote occupation as in-Rev., Doctor, Esq. etc. Holders of academic degrees such as Ph.D. are usually addressed as Drs. Furthermore, honorifics such as 'Sir' or Madam are often used by subordinates when addressing superiors or when responding to them. Addressing an individual with honorifics usually bestows on them a sense of importance and honour and this serves to

make them more receptive to the discourse. The (mis) use of honorifics could also attract positive or negative effects from those who are addressed in an ethnographic setting or context.

This study also intends to fill a vacuum by investigating the sociolinguistic use of honorifics among Hausa-English bilinguals in Zamfara State and situate the effects on the addressees/referents. To the best of this researcher's knowledge based on the available literature, was not much has been done on the sociolinguistic use of honorifics among Hausa-English bilinguals in Zamfara State. To fill this intellectual lacuna, there arose the need for this study. The paper sets out to investigate the use of honorifics as a form of address in Hausa land and to examine the sociolinguistic implications of the use of honorifics among Hausa-English bilinguals.

Empirical Studies/Theoretical Framework

Siswandi and Teguh Setiawan carried out a study on Honorifics in Dampelas Language. The study aimed at describing honorifics in the Dampelas language. The selection of the topic of the research was influenced by the lack of research related to the honorifics in the Dampelas language. The research activity was a documentary for native speakers of the Dampelas language and one of the activities in the conservation of local languages. The location of the research was in Dampelas Sub-district Donggala Regency Central Sulawesi. It was descriptive qualitative research. The findings reveal honorifics in Dampelas through kinship relation, namely nene, papa, inna, maina, make, uka, ika, tua'i, sia'ang ; non-kinship relation, namely tua + nama panggilan, konci ; pronoun, namely ami, ita, tasia ; in the field of tradition, namely tomalangkai; in the field of religious, namely puaji, poimang and social status, namely pa + nama panggilan, bu + nama panggilan and tokke.

Nneoma Fyne Ugorji investigated "Honorifics and humilifics in Ngwa-Igbo: A socio-semantic analysis". The objectives of the study were to give a typology of honorifics and humilifics in Ngwa-Igbo and to

demonstrate the socio-semantic import of their use in Ngwa land. The method of data collection for this paper was elicitation, where information was collated by consulting four elderly persons of the age range of sixty to seventy years by the researcher. The framework for the analysis of data in this paper was the Ethnography of Communication. Some of the findings of this paper were: that honorifics and humilifics are part of the linguistic repertoire of the Ngwa-Igbo dialect, that neglect to use the appropriate title for a person in Ngwa is seriously frowned upon, that the type of honorific or humilific expression, act or object used for a person reflects the honour or dis-honour accorded to the addressee, that some honorifics in Ngwa reflect the sex of the person spoken to or talked about and that honorifics and humilifics can be expressed verbally, behaviourally, behaviourally and materially.

Chinwe Ezeifeke and Joseph Sunday Ojonugwa studied “Politeness Strategies and Address Terms in Igbo and Igala Kinship Cultures.” The work aims at investigating politeness strategies in Igbo and Igala cultures to find out how these two cultures handle the various strategies, honorifics and address terms in kinship relationships. The theoretical base of the work was Brown and Levinson’s face-saving view of politeness which draws heavily from Goffman’s concept of face and interaction order. Our findings showed that the two cultures under review are conscious of affronts to positive and negative faces, favour indirectness and off-record strategies more than bald-on-record strategies. The two cultures also employ culture-specific honorifics and address terms, especially in relating to parents, spouses, elder relations, siblings and peers. It is evident from the findings that contrary to what the day present-day so-called “civilization” may de-culturize people into especially in the use of first names, these two cultures still uphold the inbuilt cultural respect in observing politeness strategies, honorifics and address terms.

Kaseem Olaniyi in a study on “Politeness Principle and Ilorin Greetings in Nigeria: A Sociolinguistic Study” examined greetings as one of the elements of politeness in a Nigerian community and how it

influences the cultural characteristics of the people. Speech act theory and the politeness principle were used to analyse the work. Also, the pragmatic context was used in analysing different types of greetings such as condolences, departure and arrival, rejoicing, daily greetings, casual greetings, and seasonal or festivity greetings. The paper found among others that 'greeting' is part of the culture of Ilorin people, and the failure to comply is an aberration. It does not only create warmth but establishes relationships which go a long way in cementing communality. The paper concludes that Ilorin greetings are embedded in and constrained by cognition, social principles of communication, and the contexts of use. Little wonder why Ilorin greetings may come as carefully chosen, catchy, and precise words which are not without religious colourations.

Hajia Hauwa Salihu conducted a study on "The Sociolinguistics Study of Gender Address Patterns in the Hausa Society." The paper looked at the choice, the shifts and the gender differential linguistics style of the use of names in a Hausa community. Social gender is an essential, stable category in the context of speech because it is perpetually (re) produced via language and communication. Addressing Hausa society is influenced by the Cultural Revolution in Hausa land. The emphasis was on the discussion of the types of names the Hausas utilize, the context in which they are applied, the semantics, and the circumstance that motivated their creation, the addresser and the addressee's relationship, the historical, cognitive, and ideological reality which determined the choice, the changes and the address variants.

Isa Mohammed in "A Study of Honorific and Titular Names Used as Part of Kanuri Personal Names" investigated the wisdom behind the use of honorific and titular/political names by Kanuri people as part of their names which is an aspect of Onomastics. The study used a qualitative (Ethnographic) method of data collection in conducting this study and a descriptive method of analysis was adopted. The names under this category are either honorific or titular/political names that are regarded as names of prestige. The study was able to

realize that these types of names are bestowed on individuals as a result of excellent performances that the individuals have achieved in a given profession, occupation, business enterprise, scholarship, education, meaningful contributions to the development of the community and/or the person is a member of the royal family who should be saddled with political responsibility. The study discovers that these kinds of names precede the owner's real names. Therefore, those who are bestowed with these kinds of prestigious names are much more popular and prouder with these names than their real names and consequently, some children who are named after these prominent personalities are also much more popular with these names than their real names. Both male and female personalities are given these names based on their gender. While this study focuses on onomastics and has Kanuri names as its concern, this study is on Hausa Hausa honorifics.

Ahmed Beita Yusuf examined Hausa Verbal Honorifics and their uses in interaction among the Hausa Speakers. The researcher found that verbal honorifics are very essential glue for conversation and general communication in Hausa. Another empirical study on Honorifics is: 'Mode of address among the Kano Hausa: Case study in sociolinguistics' this study was conducted by A.B. Yusuf (1979) The study focuses attention on various honorific titles used in Kano the nexus of the ethnographic setting. The study concentrated on: Names and Familiar terms, Address Terms of Elders Non-Hausa Individuals, Terms for Household heads and the Pilgrims political sphere terms and women circle honorifics/address terms. The study found that modes of address or honorifics constitute what is called relational language which follows certain channelled relational rules. By the use or recognition of these alternatives these various semantic alternatives open to the individuals in any particular context, the relevant roles and status sets of the different interactants can be readily revealed. The researcher prophesied that these honorifics 'may in time to come, be overshadowed by the more deference terms' in the future. In both studies by the same author, the concern was on honorifics but they were

centred on Kano Hausa. This study differs as it is carried out in Zamfara.

From the empirical review done, it is obvious that no work has been done on Hausa honorifics using Zamfara State as a case study, this is the gap in scholarship that this dissertation intends to fill up.

This work is anchored on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness postulated in 1978 and revised in 1987 which is unquestionably the most significant, having received numerous responses, uses, criticisms, adjustments, and modifications. The theory which was first developed in 1978 by Penelope Brown and Steven Levinson, was published as an article in the journal 'Questions and politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction' Later, it was issued as an independent book in 1987. This review is based on the latest printed edition, which is dated 2011. Brown and Levinson developed their theory in an attempt to identify the universal social principles and their effect on reshaping grammar. They intended to do that by understanding the reasoning behind **speakers'** and **hearers'** choices in their everyday interactions. They primarily relied on the concepts of '**face**' and '**rationality**' in their account of speakers' linguistic behaviour, claiming universality for these two concepts. They assumed that one of the most common reasons for flouting one or more of Grice's maxims is to be polite. This assumption is logical especially when considering situations where abiding by these maxims results in impolite utterances. In their theory, Brown and Levinson explained the factors influencing people's choices of the strategy to be used. They argued that speakers in different societies and cultures tend to use certain strategies in similar circumstances because such strategies would afford desired payoffs or advantages. They assumed that the nature of the payoffs of different strategies as well as the relevant social and cultural circumstances of the context, i.e. the interactants' **social distance (D)**, **relative power (P)**, and **the ranking** of the imposition of an act in a particular culture (R), are the most influential factors in people's decision of which strategy to use. Brown and Levinson believed that in all cultures, speakers' assessment

of the seriousness of an FTA involves these three contextual factors, Distance, Power, and Ranking, which are dependent context-dependent in the sense that their value changes according to the situation even if the speaker and hearer remain constant.

Methodology

The method deployed in collecting data was participant observation. This method was considered suitable for a qualitative research design, the very type that is employed here. This is because the method creates room for the researcher to become immersed in the culture and setting, she is studying. While taking on the role of a participant in the use of honorifics during interactions with the subjects being observed, she also observed others use these honorifics on others and observed the linguistic behaviour of those using honorifics and the effect they create on those addressed with honorifics. Though the method was time-consuming, it yielded positive results in terms of the ability to produce reliable primary data that was used for this study. Out of the fourteen (14) local government areas in Zamfara, four (4) local governments were purposively selected as sampled local governments for observation, with each sampled local government representing each of the three senatorial zones in the state. From Zamfara North zone, Kauran Namoda Local government was selected; Anka Local government from Zamfara West Zone and Gusau and Tsafe Local government areas from Zamfara Central zone. The purposive sampling method was used to avoid the selection of a local government area that was not accessible due to the activities of kidnappers and bandits in Zamfara State. Using the instrument of participant observation, the researcher collated over one hundred honorifics used by Hausa-English bilinguals from the sampled areas. It was from this poll of data that fifty were randomly selected to serve as the data for this study. The data was analysed using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Specifically, their tenets of the speaker (S) and the addressee or hearer (H), social distance (D), and the positive effect of politeness represented by the

desire to be liked, approved, respected, and appreciated by others, were deployed in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The data presented below are those that have political undertone and often used when expressing political issues.

Political Sphere Honorifics

S/N	Hausa Honorifics	English Interpretation
1	Mai Girma	Honourable
2	Mai Martaba	Your Majesty
3	Yallabai,	Rich and responsible person
4	Hakimin Yanki	Mayor
5	<i>Shugaba</i>	Chairman
6	Wakili	Councillor
7	Jagora Mai geskiya	Truthful leader
8	Mai zamani	Leader of the aged
9	Sarkin matasa	Leader of the government
10	Jagoran Matasa/Dattawa	Leader of the youths/elders

The data presented in this section were honorifics that were used to communicate respect to the personalities so addressed by the speakers. In Datum 1, 'Mai Girma' is an honorific used by Hausa speakers, and often loosely too, to address members of the political class, especially party members, regardless of whether or not they have been elected or appointed into office. Linguistic borrowing as a language feature is also seen in datums 5 and 6 where the words 'ciyaman' and 'kansala' for the English 'chairman' and 'councillor' respectively are deployed as honorifics to show a form of respect and a mark of politeness to those being addressed. Other honorifics that are often used in local palaces to express respect, admiration and regard to people especially the political class include Datum 2 'mai martaba' meaning 'your majesty'; Datum 3 'Yallabai' meaning 'a rich and responsible person;' Datum 4 'Mai girma' referring to Mayor, Datum 7 'Mai geskiya' referring to a

truthful leader; Datum 8 ‘Sarkin zamani’ referring to leader of the aged. Data 9 to 10 in the category above are all honorifics pouring out political respect and encomiums on those being referred to.

From the data presented in this section, there is evidence of Brown and Levinson’s propositions in their theory of politeness that foreground these data to some sociolinguistic implications. There are assumed speakers(S) who make use of these honorifics while referring to the addressees or hearers (H) for whom these honorifics are meant as forms of regard and respect. Inherently, these honorifics are face-saving either to the face of the speaker or the hearer. It is obvious that in deploying the use of honorifics, the speakers employ different sorts of strategies to avoid the bad effect of Face Threatening Acts either to the hearer's face or to the speaker's face. There are relevant social and cultural circumstances of the context that are the most influential factors in the speaker’s decision of the use of honorifics and these are the social distance (D) between the speaker and the addressee which places the addressee on a higher social pedestal; and the relative power (P), which the addressee has above the speaker. Similarly, by the use of honorifics, speakers create positive effects of politeness, respect, approval of others and appreciation of them. Honorifics of the political sphere are used to show respect and deference to leaders on the political front and are an important part of the culture of the Hausa as they prove the importance of leadership and responsibility in the culture

Professional Sphere Honorifics

The data presented below are those that have professional underpinnings and are often used when expressing issues relating to people's professions.

S/N	Hausa Honorifics	English Interpretation
11	Likita	Doctor
12	Bakanike	Engineer
13	Shehin Malamin boko	Professor
14	Mallami	Male teacher

15	Mallama	Female teacher
16	Maga takarda	A secretary/writer
17	Tarin ilimi	Fountain of knowledge
18	Shugaban	Chairman
19	Mamallakin fili ko gida	Landlord
20	Manajan Banki	Bank manager

A good number of honorifics found in the course of this study were honorifics that reflected the profession of the addressees as shown in datums to 11 to 20. 'Likita' refers to a doctor; 'Injiniya' is an engineer; 'Shehin boko' is a professor; 'Mallam' and 'Mallami' as male and female teachers respectively; 'Maga takarda' is a secretary/ writer; 'Sarkin Shugaban' is a chairman, 'Sarkin fawa' a bank manager. Other honorifics such as 'Rijiya' which means fountain of knowledge and 'Sarkin maigida' are not directly professions but are honorifics used to complement the characteristics that people possess or what they do at certain points in time.

The social import of the use of these honorifics is that there are speakers who make use of these honorifics while referring to the addressees who are the hearers. Most often than not, people are esteemed when they are addressed by the kind of jobs they do especially when jobs are reputable and valued by society thus addressing people using honorifics of professions is not only face saving to both the speaker and the addressee but boosts the self-esteem of the addressee or hearer. Social distance and relative power between the speaker and the addressee is equally revealed in the use of honorifics of professional sphere and all these are socially in tandem with Brown and Levinson's Theory of politeness. The positive effects of the use of these honorifics of the profession cannot be overemphasised as respect and regard for individuals with specific skills are underscored. This reflects the importance of these professions in Hausa land and by extension, the significant roles these professionals play.

Traditional/Religious Sphere Honorifics

The data presented here were those considered to express the traditional cum religious milieu of the Hausa-English bilinguals in the study area.

S/N	Hausa Honorifics	English interpretation
21	Sarki	King
22	Mai Daraja	Chief
23	Alhaji	Male honorific title for a rich person and one who has performed hajj
24	Hajiya	female honorific title for a rich person and one who has performed hajj
25	Jigo	Honorific reference to a leader
26	Gimbiya	Princess
27	Allah shi baka nasara	Honorific reference to a royal person
28	Alaramma	One with vast knowledge of the quoran
29	Garkuwa	Honorific for a traditional leader
30	Asiri	A formidable person

The Hausa society (and the African society in general) has a rich tradition and culture that is expressed by their language. This is manifested in the enormous use of honorifics in the traditional and religious spheres available in this data. Honorific traditional titles and religious laurels are replete in Hausa such as: ‘Sarki’(king); ‘Mai yaki’(chief); ‘Alhaji/hajiya’ (male/ female who have performed a hajj); ‘jigo’(honorific reference to a leader); ‘gimbiya (a princess); ‘Allah shi baka nasara’(honorific reference to a royalty); ‘Alaramma’(one that is knowledgeable in the Quran); ‘Garkuwa’(traditional leader); ‘Asiri’(a formidable person). As proposed in Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, we can discern between the speaker who uses these honorifics and the hearer and addressee who is addressed with the use of the honorifics, and whose social distance and relative power may put him at a disparity with the speaker. Besides the social import of the use of these honorifics in reflecting the important role of tradition and religion, they express the social diversity of the Hausa society. The

respect which the use of these honorifics accords the addressees and the politeness strategy employed by the speaker create even more social effects.

Family, Kinship and Related Sphere Honorifics

Data presented in this section were those conveying family and kinship-related honorifics.

S/N	Hausa Honorifics	English interpretation
31	Mijin Aure	Husband
32	Gido	first wife
33	Baba	Father
34	Mama	Mother
35	Kawu	Uncle
36	Gwaggo	Aunt
37	Iya	mother/grandmother /elderly woman
38	Kaka	Grandmother/ father
39	yaya	elder brother
40	Dattijo,	Elderly person

Honorifics of the family/ kinship sphere are very common in Hausa societies and by extension, the larger African cultural settings where the family plays the primordial role of instilling values of respect and regard for elders. This value inculcation translates to polite of use language experienced in the honorifics in this category. For instance, datums 31 to 40 clearly how the honorifics are used in family settings to demonstrate respect and regard for elders. Just as in the other data, the concepts of a speaker using the honorifics and an addressee/hearer being addressed apply here. Similarly, the positive effect of politeness can be gleaned from the anticipated feelings of the addressees who will be thrilled by the honorifics. The social distance and relative power between the speaker and the addressee may not necessarily apply here as the speaker could even be of a higher social distance and a higher relative power than the addressee.

Discussions

The findings of this study show that honorific forms abound in Hausa and they are used as forms of address in Hausa land. From the data gathered, presented, analysed and interpreted in this study ranging from datum 1 to 40, it is evident that honorifics are used in Hausa land and they are forms of address. These honorific forms of address in the Hausa language can be from the political sphere such as ‘Mai geskiya’(a truthful leader), ‘Maidugu’(a heroic and fearless leader) etc.; from the professional sphere, such as ‘Sarkin fawa’(bank manager), ‘wali kudu’(a judge), ‘likita’(doctor) etc.; from the traditional/religious sphere such as ‘Alamma’(one with vast knowledge of the Quran), ‘sarki’(king) etc.; from family and kinship sphere such as ‘kaka’(grandfather or mother), ‘Dattijo’(an elderly person) etc.; and the general sphere such as ‘Modibbo’(a wealthy person), ‘Mailafiya’(a calm person)etc.

Through the data presented, analysed and interpreted, the study also proves that the use of honorifics among Hausa- English bilinguals has far reaching sociolinguistic implications. Whatever categorizations under which the honorifics fall, be they political, professional, traditional/religious, family/kinship or general sphere, their uses have multiple sociolinguistic implications. The use of these honorifics show that they are an important part of the political, professional, traditional, religious, family and the general life of the people. Through the use of honorifics, there is sociolinguistic proof that importance is attached to political, traditional, religious and professional leaders as well as the hierarchical nature of the Hausa society. Similarly, another sociolinguistic implication of the use of honorifics among Hausa English bilinguals is that the use of honorifics varies depending on the speaker’s relationship with the person being addressed. Most often, the use of these honorifics create a social distance between the speaker and the addressee, especially those of the political, professional, traditional/religious, and family spheres. While the speaker places himself at a low social distance, the addressee who is proven by the use of honorifics to have higher relative power is equally placed at a higher

social distance. This is in tandem with Brown and Levinson's politeness theory.

Conclusion

Based on available data this study found that honorific forms abound in Hausa land and they are part of the linguistic repertoire of the people, these honorific forms of address in Hausa Hausa language can be from the political sphere, the professional sphere, the traditional/religious sphere, family and kinship sphere and the general sphere. The use of honorifics among Hausa- English bilinguals has far reaching sociolinguistic implications. These honorifics show that they are an important part of the political, professional, traditional, religious, family and general life of the people as a lot of significance has been attached to them by the Hausa-English bilinguals. Besides, the use of these honorifics further espouses Brown and Levinson's sociolinguistic concepts of speaker, addressee/hearer, social distance and relative power which have been explored by Hausa-English bilinguals who use these honorifics.

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