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A Sociolinguistic Study of Address Practices among the Middle Class Spouses of Ashanti and Ewe in Ghana

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Abstract:

Within familial domain, address practices have been identified to reflect the social roles in marriage and spouses' attitude towards each other. This study focused on investigating address practices by middle class spouses in Ghana from a cross-cultural perspective. This work studied the address practices of 64 spouses of Ashanti and Ewe ethnic background in four different social contexts: together alone, in the presence of in-laws, in the presence of children and before spouse's friends. The data which were collected through questionnaire and interview revealed that both men and women middle class spouses preferred using pet names when together alone to show affection and intimacy; more respect names and pet names before their children, spouse's parents and friends. It was revealed that the Ewes used more respect names than the Ashantis. Due to their social class, age did not have any effect on their choice of address terms.

Keywords: Address terms, spouses, middle class, Ashanti/Asante, Ewe, Ghana

1. Introduction

Address terms are seen as words or linguistic expressions speakers employ to appeal directly to their addressees and the usage of these terms of address is often linked to politeness (Taavitsainen & Jucker, 2003). In the view of Wadi (1999, p. 35), such names serve as "linguistic or semiotic signs that play a very crucial role" in linguistic and social interactions. The kind of address forms interlocutors employ in their daily social interactions mirrors the relationship between language and society. Within a particular speech community, people use language as a social tool to express social relation and also to express their thoughts, feelings, attitude and values (Shafiee, Sabzenvari & Motallebi, 2015). It has also been identified that social variables such as age, sex, occupation or social class can affect people's language use (e.g., see Wardhaugh, 2006). Akindele (2008) notes that the way society views sex difference is much reflected in a way language is used to talk about men and women. Moreover, people belonging to the same social class speak in a certain way which tends to be different from those of different social class and this becomes evident in their language use. This way of language use, specifically interlocutors' address terms, creates some kind of social identity for them. Esmæ'li (2011) believes that female spouses show more intimacy, affection and respect than males.

Over decades, sociolinguists have been interested in the study of language variations in different specific social contexts. This is evidenced in the works some scholars have studied towards varied forms of address terms used by spouses in different parts of the world (e.g., Esmæ'li, 2011; Shafiee, Sabzenvari & Motallebi, 2015). However, it appears that address practices by spouses in Ghana and also cross-cultural study have been under researched. This study therefore focuses on an investigation into the address terms middle class Ashanti and Ewe spouses use to refer to their partners in four different social settings (together alone, in the presence of in-laws, before children and in the presence of spouse's friends). This is necessitated by the fact that language provides windows and worldview for understanding the cultural identities and values of people (Harrison, 2000; Oyali, 2009). This is to say that the study has been organised to explore contextual language use by middle class spouses in terms of address terms, and as a result of that, the study seeks to answer the following research questions.

- What are the address terms used by the Ashanti and Ewe middle class spouses?
- What are the cross-cultural differences between the address terms used by the Ashanti and Ewe middle class female spouses and their corresponding male spouses?

2. Literature Review

In this study, the review of literature encompass how some scholars have classified people into groups based on their socioeconomic status in the society. This section will also review some terms of address usage and empirical studies that have looked at the effects of socioeconomic and educational background on the linguistic choices of spouses to address their partners.

2.1. Social Class Stratification

Weber (1968) conceptualises social class as groups of people within a population who are typified by certain common economic features. The socioeconomic background of a social class might attract a certain level of respect and recognition from the society for the groups. In a way, these groups consider themselves as belonging to a certain category by virtue of their status. It is usually seen as a kind of social inequality or social rank. Sociologists and other scholars have used different parameters to classify people in a society into different social groups based on their economic background, level of education, occupation or deference status in the society. For instance, Marx and Engels (1948), fundamentally, classified human society into two main groups: bourgeoisie representing the ruling class who own and control means of production and proletariat representing the working class, in the 'Communist Manifesto'. Saunders (1990) also grouped people into five social classes: the capitalist class, the salaried section of the middle class, lower middle class, the working class and the underclass at the bottom of the hierarchy who are often marginalised and exploited.

However, there are others who believe in a three-level classification system: the upper class, the middle class and the lower class (e.g., Poulantzas, 1975; Weber, 1968). Weber explains that the upper class comprises those who have acquired property, higher income and enjoy the advantage of education and sometimes higher positions. In sharp contrast to this is the lower class consisting of those who do not own resources to generate revenue and also do not have education which could bring them higher salary. Between these two classes is the middle class consisting of people who have little property but high wages due to their education and qualification. People who have some property and little education also fall under the middle class system. The current study situates the participants in the three classification system of social class, especially the middle class. The middle class is of utmost interest here because the current work studies the use of address terms used by middle class couples among the Ashantis and Ewes in Ghana.

2.2. Address Terms

Over the world, address terms have provided significant windows through which cultural and ethnic norms, values and identities are constructed. This is fundamentally carried through language use. People's worldview is tied to this kind of culture (Oyali, 2009). There are varied ways scholars have conceptualised address terms. Some scholars have grouped some interactive names or address practices as Kinship Terms (e.g., Dickey, 1997; Oyali, 2009), Pet/Endearment Names (e.g., Dickey, 1997; Esmae'li, 2011); First Names (e.g., Dickey, 1997; Esmae'li, 2011), Respect Names (e.g., Esmae'li, 2011), Personal Names (e.g., Afful, 2006; Esmae'li, 2011; Katakami, 1997; Makoni et al., 2007; Oyali, 2009; Zuercher, 2007), Teknonyms (e.g., Oyali, 2009) and Patronymic Names (e.g., Odoyo, 2018).

2.3. Some Related Studies

Esmae'li (2011) studied 200 Iranian spouses on their choices of address terms they preferred to address their partners. The focus of the paper was to investigate the effect of social context on the various usages of address terms. The study revealed that women and men used pet names more when they were alone as couples. It was again found out that the couples used respect names more than first name in front of their father/mother in-laws. Regarding address terms usage in relation to those with high education and age, the men did not show any difference; the same was recorded in the case of the women in terms of educational level. However, the women showed some significant difference regarding age difference, in that the women between 20-55 years largely used more first names than respect names in order to demonstrate more affection, whereas those above 55 years used more respect names, possibly, to show their respect towards their husbands.

Shafiee, Sabzenvari and Motallebi (2015) conducted a study on the effects of economic status and level of education on the address term choices by Iranian young couples in Shahrekord. They studied 50 couples and grouped them based on their educational level and economic status. The study revealed that different patterns of address terms were used by the couples in different situations. It was realised that the forms of linguistic choices by the couples were determined by the level of education but economic status could not affect the choice of the address terms.

These related empirical studies reviewed so far examined Iranian spouses in relation to the effects of their socioeconomic, educational and age background in different social contexts to demonstrate their address practices. These studies are related to the current study in that it also explores the effects of socioeconomic, age and educational variables in almost the same social contexts. However, this one is situated in Ghana and it is an attempt to investigate address terms by middle class couples among two ethnic groups in Ghana, thus, Ashantis and Ewes.

3. Methodology

This study chiefly uses the ethnographic approach, although some numbers will be displayed in tables for the purpose of analysis and clarity. This section covers the background of the participants involved in the study, the instruments for the data collection, procedure for the data collection, the results and discussion.

3.1. Participants

This work employed 32 middle class spouses each from Asante and Ewe ethnic groups of Ghana as participants for the study. In all, 64 spouses (32 spouses each comprising 16 males and 16 females each from the two ethnic groups) were involved in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select those classified under middle class with a child or

children to suit the purpose of the study. In addition to that, snowballing technique was used to select the couples from the Ewe ethnic group, especially. This was due to the fact that the researcher belonged to the Akan/Asante ethnic group so he was not familiar with the Ewes but had to rely on friends who were natives of Ewe to assist in identifying subjects who would fit into the social strata for this study. The researcher carefully selected couples who were from the same ethnic background and have stayed in their native land since childhood to suit the aim of the study. This was to ensure their familiarity with their tradition. All the subjects happened to be government workers who had acquired tertiary degree, especially university first degree, except three females who possessed a diploma. All the participants were in the age range of 25-47 years, with an average age of 33 years. The average age for the men in the Asanti group was 37.8 years (in the age range of 32-43 years), while the women were within the age range of 27-43 years (average age of 31.8 years). In relation to the Ewes, the men were between the ages of 30-47 years (with an average age of 36.8), but the women were between the ages of 25-37 years with 32 years as the average age. In all the cases, the men were older than their wives, except a couple from Asante who were of the same age. It is also a common norm that the women show respect to their husbands in both traditions no matter their status.

3.2. Instruments

This work used questionnaire and unstructured interview to collect the data for the study. The questionnaire was categorised into two parts: part one and part two. The first part asked for personal information about the participants in order to ascertain background information about their social status that would suit the study. The second part tasked participants to provide the kind of terms they used to address their partners in four social settings: (1) when the two of them were alone, (2) in the presence of their in-law(s), (3) in the presence of their children and (4) in the presence of their partner's friends. This was to contextualise different situations where spouses appeared to use varied address terms for each other for different reasons and purposes. The unstructured interview was also employed to seek explanation to certain issues which could not be explained by the questionnaire and, indeed, some details and relevant information about the culture of the subjects were revealed through the interview sections. For instance, some subjects did not provide vivid information about themselves on the questionnaire but the unstructured interview provided these details. Again, the interview solicited for detailed justification of their respective choices of the address terms.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection can be very frustrating, especially, gaining the trust of participants to be involved in a study in order to produce naturally occurring data. The participants were unwilling to open up for the collection of the data for this study, as it was feared that their personal information would go viral as has been in recent cases in varied social media. Consequently, the researcher approached the participants in a friendly manner to explain what the study purported to do. They were additionally assured of strict confidentiality as the work only sought to use their information for academic purpose or research only and also without using their real names. Questionnaires were, therefore, given to them to answer followed by the interview to ascertain their preferences for using certain terms to address their respective spouses in different contexts, which were recorded using Samsung Galaxy duos (GT-S7582). The recordings were kept on Toshiba Satellite laptop for further reference when necessary.

4. Results and Discussion

This section comprises the analysis, findings and the discussion of the results of the questionnaires which were administered to the couples. The results have been simplified in tables and the work has been organised according to the sections and different contexts in which the questionnaire solicited for information from the subjects (together alone, in the presence of in-laws, in the presence of children and in the presence of spouse's friends). The reasons for their respective choices of terms of address have been explained which were complemented with the support of the interview results. However, it is prudent to define and contextualise the address terms which are used in this work for clarity of analysis and discussion. It is important to note that the forms of address terms in this study are limited to only names; pronouns are not considered.

The kind of terms of address that have been used in this work include first names (FN), pet names (PTN), respect names (RN), multiple names (MN) and last names (LN). The first names here denote given names of the spouses, such as Patricia, Christopher or Jocelyn. Pet names, in this work, refer to endearment terms, nicknames of the spouses or names that have been either morphologically coined or clipped from the first name or the last name of the spouses. Examples of such names include U (from the first name Eunice), Hari (from the first name Harrison), Ese (from the last name Sesime) or Gladi (from the first name Gladys). Such names were created without much semantical or etymological implications. The names only serve as linguistic identity and self-determination by users to establish their relationships with their spouses. The examples given show that most of the names were coined or clipped from the first names and some of these names are known to the spouses only but some are also known to the kindred and friends.

Here, Respect names do refer to names that are deemed deference in the presence of children, friends and in-laws. Semantically, those that show respect in front of the children, for instance, are names that indicate kinship terms—children's relationship with the father or mother, for instance, Daddy, Daddy Osei or Mama. However, some of the names used to demonstrate deference in the presence of in-laws or spouse's friends included title plus surnames, for example, Mr Ayem or

Mr Edem and sometimes kinship terms like Efo (Uncle) or Fo (brother) in Ewe. Most Ewe females used these same names to refer to their husbands. Another example is Nana Yaw. Nana is an Akan/Asante name for a grandparent or chief, which is usually given to young ones to show relation to someone or the elderly and Yaw is a male Thursday born name. Such names carry in them the linguistic force of identity and values of perceived respect of the indigenous people. Multiple names as used in this work denote names that are more than one and, mostly, the combination of a day born name and a surname or last name the respective parents gave to them at the tender ages. Such names include Ama Asieduwaa (Ama is a female Wednesday born name and Asieduwaa is a surname). The last names refer to only surnames or names usually rooted to families or kindred, for example Ankomah, Edem or Twumwaa. For the purpose of ethical matters, the names used in this study are mixture of pseudonyms and real ones. The actual names used are for those who agreed on using them for the purpose of analysis.

4.1. Item 1: Together Alone

	Gender	FN	PTN	RN	MN	LN	Total
Asante	Men	2	12		2		16
	Women		14	2			16
Ewe	Men	2	14				16
	Women	2	12			2	16

Table 1: The Choice of Address Terms by Middle Class Spouses When Together Alone

Table 1 demonstrates the choice of address forms the middle class spouses used to address their partners when they were alone by both Ashantis and Ewes. It is evident that the middle class couples of Asante and Ewe preferred using more pet names than respect names and multiple names when they were alone. It is an indication that, in the love affairs of these couples, FN, RN, MN or LN had little or no space. With regard to the Ashantis, 12 of the 16 men used pet names to address their spouses whereas two each used multiple names and first names. The men who used the pet names (such as U or Fari, Conie) claimed that such names showed their intimacy and affection towards their partners any time they were alone. Most of such names were special to them alone. In this way, "every person comes to choose a certain name for a person as his form of address" (Katakami, 1997, p. 210). The other four men argued that they preferred using first names or multiple names like Ama Asieduaa for their wives because they wanted to associate with their wives' root, as Ama being a day born (Wednesday) and Asieduaa being a family name. They further stated that such names were, sometimes, uncommon to the public and, consequently, brought them closer to their partners' families than using any other name for them.

With regard to their wives, 14 out of 16 used pet names and two employed respect names. The 14 women justified their usage of pet names as being driven by passion and intimacy towards their husbands, and that they were not concerned about the age differences. This may also be due to the equal level of education and their monthly earnings. Coincidentally, a couple had the same qualification and the same age; only their occupation deferred. The other two opted to use respect names, like Nana Kwame, to address their husbands when alone to show some respect and passion concurrently.

Table 1, again, illustrates that most middle class men and women of Ewe who responded to the questionnaire preferred using more pet names when they were alone as couples. It is clear from Table 1 that 14 Ewe men indicated using pet names with their counterparts in their private lives. Only two of the men addressed their wives with first names when alone with them. These couples justified their preferences for pet names as showing their intimacy and closeness towards their partners. They pointed out that, in their love life, they did not want to exhibit any dominance and superiority due to reciprocity of matters of love.

In relation to the Ewe women, pet names were preferable when addressing their spouses in their private lives, despite the fact that two each used first names and last names. They gave the same reason as the men in the use of pet names, thus showing equity in love. The other four who used the first and the last names surprisingly indicated that they wanted to express their love and at the same time equality in matters of love. The use of first, last and pet names by these couples might be due to their equal level of education, socioeconomic status and modernity. Although there existed age differences between the husbands and their wives, the use of address terms, when alone, did not have any impact on their choice of address terms in relation to their daily social interactions. On the account of their qualification, both men and women were on the same qualification as first degree holders.

4.2. Item 2: in the Presence of in-Laws

	Gender	FN	PTN	RN	MN	LN	Total
Asante	Men	2	2	4	6	2	16
	Women		12	4			16
Ewe	Men	8	2	4		2	16
	Women		2	14			16

Table 2: The Choice of Address Terms by Middle Class Spouses in the Presence of Their in-Laws

Table 2 shows the kind of linguistic expressions the Asante and the Ewe middle class spouses used in addressing their respective partners in the presence of their in-laws. It can be observed that the spouses used first names, pet names, respect names and multiple names to address their partners. To the majority of Asante male middle class spouses, multiple names (37.5%) which contained the surnames, such as Adwoa Asieduaa, of their spouses were their preferred choices when addressing them in the presence of their in-laws. In the homes and families of the women, the men noted that most of their partners' parents sometimes used multiple names to refer to their daughters and for that matter it was also relevant to identify with them. Their intention was to prove to their in-laws that they really knew the daughters and their wives very well. It was also a platform for the males to use a common name that the third parties could identify with their partners; or that they could easily identify whom (their spouses) they were referring to. The two each of the males who used FN and LN gave similar reason as the six respondents. Moreover, the PTN used was to demonstrate to the in-laws about the men's affection and commitment to their relative (wives). Although not common, the other two addressed their wives with RN before their in-laws, to be in line with the family's way of showing respect to such females. Such names of the women were earned in their respective families due to the respect they commanded.

With respect to the women, they seem to share a different view. As the men addressed their partners to show their familiarity with their wives in the presence of their in-laws, the majority (12 out of 16) of the Asante middle class women used pet names, like Dani, Ob or Harri, before their in-laws to address their husbands to show affection and intimacy. They pointed out that it was not easy, sometimes, for them to use such names in this context because it appeared as not showing any respect before the in-laws as custom demands. This might be due to the influence of education and occupation. The other four women used respect names like Agya (father/elder in Ashanti) or Nana Yaw (grandparent plus a day born name) to refer to their husbands in the presence of their in-laws. They indicated that these names were mostly used by the in-laws and their intuitions denote deference; so using them in the presence of their in-laws was more appropriate.

In the presence of in-laws, the middle class Ewe men spouses used first names (8), pet names (2), respect names (4) and last names (2) to address their wives. From Table 2, it can be seen that the Ewe men did not use any multiple name to address their wives. The two who used the pet names (e.g., Eli from Elikplim) explained that they wanted to demonstrate their passion and intimacy to their wives in the presence of their in-laws. The interview revealed that the users of the first (e.g., Mavis or Gifty) and last (e.g., Kafui or Kuma) names wanted to address their wives before their in-laws to demonstrate their superiority, dominance and control over their spouses. The choice of respect name, for instance Sister Alice, by one man was as a result of his wife being the eldest sister and consequently all the in-laws addressed her with respect name. He therefore had no option but to adopt that respect name when he was part of the wife's family. The others users of respect names indicated showing deference to their spouses in the presence of their in-laws.

From Table 2, it is obvious that almost all the middle class Ewe wives had no other option than to use respect names to address their husbands in front of their in-laws, unlike the Asante women. It can be observed from Table 2 that 14 middle class Ewe women employed respect names such as Efo (meaning uncle) or Mr Ayem to refer to their husbands in this context. The generally assigned reason was that, irrespective of the woman's age, academic qualification or economic wealth, it was the demand of their custom and practices to show respect to their husbands in the presence of any third person, particularly in-laws. Only two of the women were able to address their spouses with pet names before their in-laws. The two said that they were very intimate with their in-laws to the extent that they have been conceived as part of them and that is why they were able to use such names for their spouses.

4.3. Item 3: in the Presence of Children

	Gender	FN	PTN	RN	MN	LN	Total
Asante	Men	4	2	6	2	2	16
	Women		10	6			16
Ewe	Men	4	6	4		2	16
	Women		4	12			16

Table 3: The Choice of Address Terms by Middle Class Spouses in the Presence of Children

Table 3 displays information about the choice of linguistic expressions middle class spouses of Asante and Ewe often used to address their partners any time they were in the presence of their children. It can be seen from Table 3 that six of the Asante men used respect names to refer to their spouses any time their children were present. Some of these respect names included names like Mama Eunice or simply Mama. These men explained that they wanted the children to know how to call their mothers. These names, to some of the spouses, have come to stay although they did not intend to call them with such names, as they were only meant to teach their children to respect their mothers. This identity construction reflects the status and role of motherhood in the family. However, two men each used multiple names like Patricia Nyarko or Linda Adu and last names (for example, Agyeiwaa) to address their spouses. Their intention was to help the children to be familiar with the mothers' real or family names, apart from Mummy. In spite of the perceived respect and personal names of the spouses, two of

the men addressed their spouses with pet names in front of their child(ren). This was to show their commitment of love irrespective of situation and time.

It can also be seen from Table 3 that the middle class Asante female spouses preferred using pet names and respect names to address their husbands in the presence of their children. Ten of them used PTN while six used RN. The majority indicated that they still wanted to show their affection and intimacy to their husbands by using the pet names, like Dear Dani, even in the presence of their children. However, they had already directed the children to call them Daddy because Dear Dani, for example, was only meant for the mother to call the child's father. This contradicts Mallet's (2003) claim and general observation that African couples are not expected to show affection for each other in public. Six other women used respect names to address their husbands in this social context. Those who used respect names, like Nana Yaw, also gave the same reason as the first as being limited to only the mother to use. They added that such names were not known to many people except their family members; even they did not normally use them. It therefore made them feel comfortable and special to use them to address their husbands in all situations. A woman disclosed that she preferred addressing her husband Daddy, a respect name, in front of her children to show respect and to help the children know their father. In this case, she situates herself in the status of childhood to serve as an example for the children to emulate. This combination of respect names and pet names is in line with Esmae'li's (2011) assertion that spouses generally use that to demonstrate the relevance of implicitly teaching their children respect and intimacy.

In terms of the Ewes, middle class men spouses had four different ways of addressing their wives in the presence of their children, whereas the women used only two types of address terms. Table 3 shows that six of the men preferred addressing their spouses by pet names (e.g., Eli from Eliakplim, G from Georgina or Gladi from Gladys). They used these endearment terms because they were used to such terms and found them more romantic to use irrespective of the children being present. Four each preferred using first names (for example Lydia) or respect names (e.g., Maame as mother or Maa Eli), while two preferred using last names (e.g., Sesime). The FN and LN users thought that they were used to such names in all contexts and again noted that it was meant for the children to be associated with the mothers' names; it was not for the children to call them by those names. In a way, this practice implicitly suggests their superiority over their wives in the presence of their children. However, the other four thought it was necessary to show some respect to the mothers before the children so that they could imbibe the value of respect right away.

In the case of the women, 75% of the Ewe middle class wives used only respect names to address their husbands in the presence of their children, as can be seen in Table 3. The kinds of respect names they employed included names like Boss, Daddy or Papa Param (meaning Daddy Param). The first reason they assigned to this option was to show respect towards their husbands in the presence of their children. It was also the demand of their custom to show that kind of deference to their husbands all the time. Lastly, it was meant to teach the children how to call their father and to orient them to their tradition. In spite of these reasons, four of the women preferred using pet names to address their spouses before their children. Their choice was simply based on their intimacy with their husbands.

4.4. Item 4: in the Presence of Spouse's Friends

	Gender	FN	PTN	RN	MN	LN	Total
Asante	Men	6	4	6			16
	Women		12	4			16
Ewe	Men	6	4	2		4	16
	Women		6	8		2	16

Table 4: Address Terms by Middle Class Spouses in the Presence of Partner's Friends

Table 4 shows that, generally, middle class spouses make difference preferences when it comes to using linguistic expressions to address their partners in the presence of their spouses' friends. The spouses used terms of address such as first names, pet names, respect names and last names to refer to their partners in this last social context. From Table 4, it is evident that six out of the 16 middle class Ashanti husbands used first names to address their wives in the presence of their friends. They explained that they used first names in this situation only because all their friends and outsiders knew them by the first names—that using another name might appear odd. The four who used pet names indicated that the names they used (like Fari or Odo/Love) were some of the common names their friends knew already and so they identified their spouses by such names in this situation and also to ultimately show the intimate gap between them and their spouses. Six others used respect names (like Maame Eunice) to address their spouses in the presence of their friends due to the fact that their friends already knew them by that name. The intuition about this name carries some deference because of the name Maame (meaning mother) attached to it, but its frequent public use sometimes weakens its potency of respect-carrying name and becomes common to the extent that all people use it not because of its purported sense of deference.

The Ashanti wives of the same social class with their husbands opted for pet names and respect names to address their husbands in the presence of their spouses' friends. From Table 4, it can be seen that the majority (12, representing 75%) of these women used pet names to address their husbands while four used respect names. Five of them pointed out that their

choice for using clipped pet names, like Harri, was due to the fact that the husbands' friends used those names to refer to them. The intention of the other seven women who used pet names (for instance Dani Dear), however, was to show passion and intimacy towards their husbands in the presence of their friends. These claims of the women defile the general expectation that, in public domain, African spouses are unexpected to demonstrate affection for each other (Mallet, 2003). Unlike their male counterparts, only four women used respect names in this context. They indicated that using respect names to address their husbands was to show deference before their friends.

Again, from Table 4, it is obvious that the middle class Ewe men preferred addressing their spouses using four different types of terms in the presence of their partners' friends. Four of the respondents used pet names as their choice to refer to their partners in this last situation to show their closeness to them. Most of such names were coinages (e.g., Eli from Elikplim, G from Georgina or Gladi from Gladys) which were not known to their friends. Two used respect names and justified that they wanted to respect their wives in front of their friends. They further revealed that they were used to such names because of how all the family members, including the parents, called them by using Sister before their names to show respect. Six respondents preferred using first names while the four left used last names, such as Rose or Mawusi, to address their spouses in the presence of their friends because they wanted them to associate with their names or root as Ewes. A user of LN, for example, indicated that the wife was an Ewe by birth but due to their stay outside the Volta region of Ghana her language, particularly, does not give her away and because of that she is not known by many people as belonging to that ethnic group, including most of her friends.

The Ewe female respondents also showed different choices of address terms to refer to their husbands in this last situation. From Table 4, it can be realised that while eight women used respect names (e.g., Fo Etteh or Brother Etteh) to address their spouses in the presence of friends, six of them preferred addressing them with pet names (like K from the Monday day born name Kojo or Nani from Nelson). The users of PN explained that they preferred using those names to show passion and closeness towards their husbands in the presence of friends. But to the eight, demonstrating respect to their spouses before friends was worth celebrating. However, two women opted for last names (e.g., Dogbe or Param) to address their spouses in this last situation because such names were used by friends and they were comfortable calling their husbands by their LNs before their friends. In other words, their justification was that their husbands' friends also knew and used those names.

4.5. Gender Choice of Address Terms

This section is an assessment of disparities that existed between the male and the female spouses in terms of their preferences for the address terms used for their respective partners. General observations were made and the results are tabulated in Table 5, while Figure 1 shows a clear representation of the number or variation of how both men and women used the address terms in this study.

Address Terms	Asante		Ewe		Gross Total	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
FN	14	0	20	2	34	2
PTN	20	48	26	24	46	72
RN	16	16	10	34	26	50
MN	10	0	0	0	10	0
LN	4	0	8	4	12	4

Table 5: The Choice of Address Terms by Both Ethnic Groups in Terms of Gender

Table 5 gives the summary of the choices of address terms by the Ashanti and Ewe middle class spouses in terms of gender based on the four different contexts (together alone, in the presence of in-laws, before children and in the presence of spouse's friends). In all, we can see that only the middle class Asante men spouses employed all the five types of address terms used in this study. In other words, none of the spouses used multiple names apart from the Asante men. In terms of showing romance and intimacy, either in public or private, the results from Table 5 suggest that the women (72) were leading the men (46) in both tribes. Generally, the men used more first names and last names than the women, indicating their dominance and control over their wives. We can see that the women used more respect names than the males, but the middle class Ewe spouses used more respect names than their female counterparts in Asante.

In terms of cross-cultural same sex comparisons, we can see that the Ewe men used more first names and last names than the Asante men in addressing their spouses. With respect to the female spouses, only two of the Ewes used first names and four used last names to address their spouses, while the Asantes used none. This shows women's struggle to close the feminist gap between men and women in society. In terms of showing intimacy, the Ewe men (26) were a little ahead of the Asantes (20). However, in relation to the females, the Asante women (48) used more endearment terms than the Ewes (24). This suggests that the Asante females appeared more romantic than the Ewe spouses in all the contexts. But when it comes to sticking to tradition by way of showing deference to husbands, the results indicated that the Ewes were more conservative than the Asantes, irrespective of the level of education and socioeconomic powers. The Asante men showed a little respect to their wives more than the Ewes.

The general picture of the comparisons can be clearly seen in Figure 1 below. The figure demonstrates the frequency of use of the address terms by the respondents in terms of gender, which are displayed in bar chart. The blue bars represent first name usage by the middle class spouses, the brown colour for pet names, green for respect names, indigo for multiple names and deep sky blue for last name usage. In the gross total column, it can be seen from the chart that the highest bar is the brown bar for pet names which was used by the females. The second highest bar is the green bar, also for the females, for respect names. But the shortest bars in the gross total are the bars for first and last names usage for females.

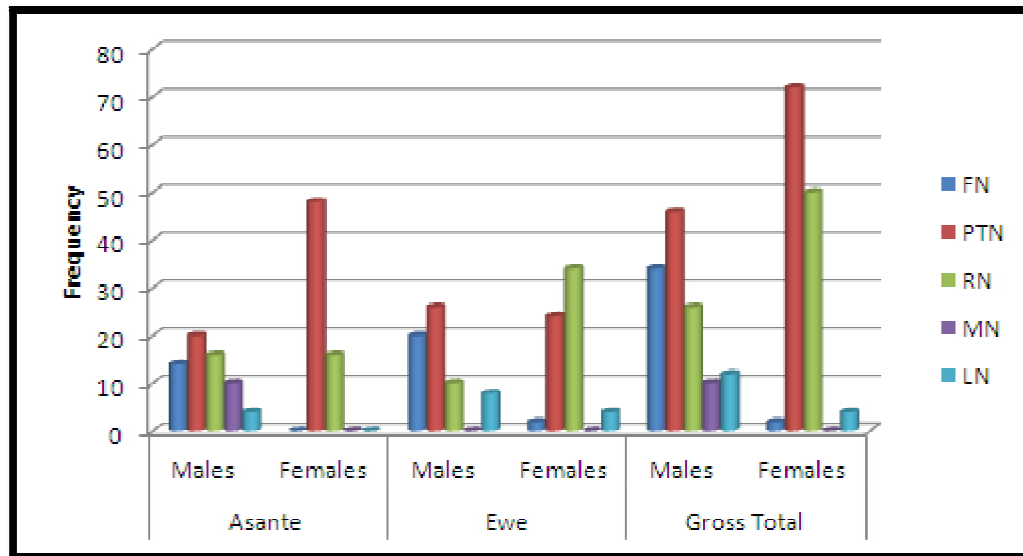


Figure 1: The Use of Address Terms in Terms of Gender

5. Conclusion and Implication

The intention of this study was to chiefly explore language use by middle class spouses cross-culturally, especially their address terms, and to take cognisance of the fact that individuals use language differently. The basic social variables considered were ethnicity, education and socioeconomic powers. So far, the work has looked intently at the language use by Ashanti and Ewe spouses and realised that the majority of the middle class spouses often preferred using pet names more than the other names when they were together alone to show affection and intimacy towards each other in marriage, irrespective of being Ashanti or Ewe. But the evidence pointed out that the females used pet names more than their male counterparts, which is in line with the same claim by Esmæ'li (2011). In this first situation, the Ashanti females used more pet names than the Ewe female spouses. The opposite pattern was recorded in the case of their male counterparts. In another social context where their in-laws were present, women preferred using pet names and respect names more than the men in both groups. Whereas the Ewe females used more respect names, the Ashanti females used more pet names to address their husbands. The heavy use of more pet names point to the situation of moral divide—where the indigenous society expects the female spouses to show more respect to their husbands and at the same time the role of intimacy space. Typically, in public domains, female naming practices are expected to reflect male dominance (Zuercher, 2007). On the contrary, the Ashanti men preferred using multiple names, while the Ewe men used varied individual choices to address their wives.

In the presence of children, both men and women used more respect names to address their partners to demonstrate respect. The Ewe women used more respect names than the Ashanti women. In this same situation, the Ashanti men used more respect names than the Ewe men who used individual preferences. Again, apart from the Asante women who used more pet names, the rest of the spouses from both ethnic groups opted for individual choices like first name, respect names and last names to address their partners in the presence of the spouses' friends. The results of this study confirm Harrison's (2000) assertion that language serves as very crucial lenses for constructing ethnic and cultural identities. We, therefore, tend to understand the norms, thoughts, values and the worldview of the participants or the interactants (Oyali, 2009).

In the nutshell, the majority of the spouses varied their address practices which were mostly determined by familial setting and the presence of a third party. Some of the address terms patterns revealed in this study seem to remove more male domination over the females due to their equal level of social class in terms of their socioeconomic and educational background, unlike couples of different social classes as revealed by Shafiee, Sabzenvari and Motallebi (2015). However, age difference did not have any significant effect on their address practices. This study is very significant because it draws the attention of scholars to the cross-cultural differences that exist between Ashanti and Ewe middle class spouses and the role of social context in the choice of address terms. More importantly, there is some growing trend of address terms usage by the Ashanti women using pet names instead of respect names, as tradition demands, in formal situations to address their husbands.

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