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Categories of address forms in Pakistani English at a multilingual academic setting[1]

The variations of address forms in multilingual and multicultural contexts create problems in their understanding, proper choice, and usage. The goal of this study is to identify the main categories of forms of address used by students and teachers in multilingual Pakistani universities and to highlight the socio-cultural factors that determine their choice and preference in various contexts, both formal and informal. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed for data collection in four public sector universities in the Sindh province of Pakistan. The material obtained from 252 participants was supplemented and verified through ethnographic observation and analyzed employing both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. The preliminary results show that in multilingual academic settings, Pakistani interlocutors use a variety of categories of address forms with the domineering position of names and kinship terms. Speaking Pakistani English, they use both English and local terms of address borrowed from Sindhi, Urdu, and other local languages to express their cultural values, identity, and attitudes. The findings show that English forms of address are predominantly used in formal contexts while native terms are mostly observed in informal ones. The study provides some new linguistic facts about the impact of culture on address forms. Its results may contribute to further investigation of address forms from socio-pragmatic and cultural perspectives.

Keywords: *address forms, multilinguals, cultural values, academic discourse, Pakistani English.*

В многоязычных и многокультурных контекстах существование вариантов форм обращения создает проблемы их понимания, правильного выбора и использования. Цель настоящего исследования — определить основные категории форм обращения, используемых студентами и преподавателями в многоязычной образовательной среде пакистанских университетов, и выявить социокультурные факторы, определяющие их выбор и предпочтение в различных ситуациях, как формальных, так и неформальных. Материал собран путем анкетирования 252 студентов четырех государственных университетов провинции Синд в Пакистане, дополнен и верифицирован с помощью метода включенного наблюдения. Полученные данные проанализированы с применением как количественных, так и качественных методов. Предварительные результаты показали, что в многоязычной образовательной среде пакистанские собеседники используют различные категории форм обращения, основными из которых являются имена собственные и термины родства. Помимо английских форм обращения, в пакистанском английском широко используются обращения, заимствованные из местных языков (синдхи, урду и др.), что позволяет собеседникам выразить свои культурные ценности и идентичность. Отмечено также, что английские формы обращения используются в более формальных контекстах. В исследовании приведены некоторые новые языковые факты, свидетельствующие о влиянии культуры на формы обращения и их использование. Результаты работы могут способствовать дальнейшим исследованиям форм обращения в социо-прагматическом и социокультурологическом аспектах.

Ключевые слова: *формы обращения, мультилингвы, культурные ценности, образовательный дискурс, пакистанский английский.*

Introduction

Address forms are a complex and variable area of study. In bi-multilingual settings, the selection of an address form gets more complicated because of socio-cultural differences, and the cultural background of interlocutors. Pakistani universities have a multilingual environment, and such linguistics diversity increases the problems for interlocutors in choosing an appropriate address term for an addressee.

Address forms are words or phrases referred to the addressee by the speaker based on their relationships and context. The use and choice of address forms depend on a number of social factors such as age, gender, status, profession, rank, etc. Among other factors, culture is one the most important component in the choice of an address form. Variety in the use of address forms is "crucial for establishing and maintaining social relationships" [1. P. 1]. As a result, developing the relations between interlocutors depends on one of the determining factors such as addressing practices. Address forms reveal how the relationships are regulated between interlocutors and how they are maintained by them which is depending on the usage of address forms.

To make our communication effective we attempt to choose certain address forms such as nominal and pronominal. This choice is based on the situation and the particular context — like addressing a friend in a café, and when in a classroom. However, the selection and preference of one specific address term over another "what is considered the 'right' form of address in a particular situation — vary over time, across speech communities, social networks, and even according to individual preference" [Ibid.]. The function and pragmatic meaning of address forms may vary according to the addressee, situation, and relationships between the interlocutors. For instance, one person can be addressed as *Dave, David, uncle David, Mr. Brown, or Professor Brown*.

This paper is a pilot study of an ongoing research project on addressing practices in Pakistani English in an academic setting. The study focuses on the identification of categories of address forms used by multilingual students of Pakistani Universities in different communication contexts and describes their functions and pragmatic features. One of the reasons to select multilingual academic settings is the continuous mobility of multicultural educational scenarios. Pakistani students are multicultural and multilingual belonging to different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. From this perspective, the study hypothesize that students' communicative values and native traditions regulate their choice of address forms in a given context when they speak Pakistani English. The study aims to define categories of address forms in multilingual academic setting of Pakistani universities and identify the socio-cultural factors that determine their choice in various contexts.

Literature review

Sociolinguists got interested in address forms since the beginning of research often credited to the publication of Brown and Gilman's [2] work. After their study, the focus shifted to social categories such as class, gender, age, and status, and the theory of address forms developed into an interdisciplinary research field.

Ervin-Tripp [3] argued that different speech communities may adhere to a different social group within the same speech community with different rules. These inferences may create misunderstandings or miscommunication between them particularly in multilingual settings. Labov [4] a variationist sociolinguist, claims that the mechanism of linguistic change in its social contexts and their social setting consequently affects our language and communication. Handling proper usage of address forms is essential for effective message delivery.

Universities in Pakistan have multilingual students from all over the country. They come from different provinces, cities, and towns and possess abilities to speak different local languages, such as Sindhi, Urdu, Balochi, Punjabi, Seraiki among many others. This multilingual setting of Pakistani universities can assist in exploring the manifestation of local linguaculture in English communication concerning address forms. Multilingualism in Pakistani universities affects the speech and language of the interlocutors. Among other local languages, English enjoys the official status and medium of instruction in universities [5], however, there as seventy-seven indigenous languages spoken [6].

Another important factor is the culture that influences the interlocutors' communicative behavior and shapes the worldview of speakers. The use of language and communication needs to be viewed from the cultural affiliation of interlocutors. Cultural linguistics [7] suggests that the relationship between language and cultural conceptualizations is important for "understanding of how English is used by communities of speakers around the world to express their cultural conceptualizations, including their world views" [Ibid. P. 515]. The interlocutor's values, beliefs, concepts, and cultural affiliation show the relationship between language and communication. Thus, the investigation of the addressing practices in different cultures is important, as address forms vary across languages and cultures [8–13] and even across varieties of the same language [14–16]. This study explores terms of address in Pakistani English focusing on the impact of the local languages and culture on address forms and their usage in the multilingual setting of Pakistani universities.

Data, methods, and analysis

An interdisciplinary theoretical framework adopted in the study is based on cultural studies, [12; 17], sociolinguistics [4; 18; 19], multilingualism [5; 6], and intercultural pragmatics [9; 20]. The study aims to identify the categories of address forms in multilingual settings of Pakistani universities used by teachers and students while speaking English and define the role of context (social, cultural, contextual, and relational) in their choice and preference.

The data were collected through the questionnaire adapted from Larina and Suryanarayan [21]. Additionally, the data were supplemented and verified with ethnographic observation. Participants of the survey belonged to four public sector universities located in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Informed consent was taken and participation was voluntary. The questionnaire contained several questions aiming to find address forms used in different university settings, namely, in formal situations (classroom, department, and office), informal situations (café), and digital communication. Thus, the study goal was to explore the address forms considering socio-cultural, contextual, and relational factors.

This paper presents some data gained from students through the questionnaire and teacher-student interactions from ethnographic observation. Indeed, the author's take is that being a faculty member with more than a decade of teaching experience and interactions with students the analysis can give some insights into the data.

The data gathered from n = 252 questionnaires were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. As the data set contained English address forms as well as the address forms borrowed from Sindhi, Urdu, Balochi, Punjabi, Seraiki, and other local languages, we consider them under the term 'native' address forms for the all-inclusive demonstration of the data. The study follows Braun's [8] scheme for the analysis of categories of address forms. Moreover, if any new category emerged it was added to the set of categories.
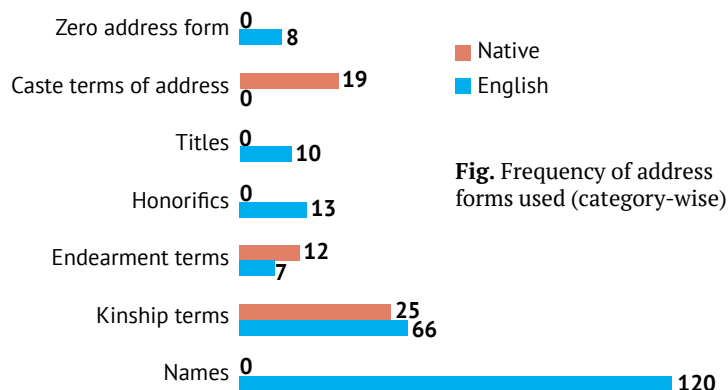
The study aimed to identify the main categories of address forms used by students and teachers in multilingual Pakistani universities and highlight the socio-cultural factors that determine their choice and preference in various contexts. Based on the focus of the study, the following questions have been posed:

- What categories of address forms are used by students and teachers in multilingual settings of Pakistani universities?
- What socio-cultural factors determine their choice in various contexts?

Results and discussion

The data analysis shown below is based on categories of address forms in multilingual settings by frequency (see figure). The results show that the most frequent categories of address forms are first names and kinship terms employed by students and teachers.

The use of names between students is common. They use names for addressing each other in different ways. Pakistani names follow a combination of naming patterns (e. g. Rizwan Ali or vice versa Ali Rizwan). However, the results show that students use first names (e. g. Rizwan or Ali) more often than combination names. The use of first names is a marker of intimacy and closeness among interlocutors which reflects the nature of the relationships between them. From students to teacher's conversations, students in most cases use the title with first names i.e. *Dr. Hassan* (male first

Fig. Frequency of address forms used (category-wise)

name) or *Professor Zeenat* (female first name) in both formal and informal contexts. Students rarely use first names for teachers because the use of the first name is highly discouraged or even considered bad-mannered due to social and cultural values. Teachers address students by their first names calling students as *Shahzad*, *Om Kumar* (male first name), *Mehrosh, Mariam* (female first name), etc.

Kinship terms were noticed as the second most frequent category used by both students and teachers. Kinship terms were used in different formal and informal contexts. Students use both English and native language kinship terms. Native kinship terms such as *ada / bha* (in Sindhi) 'brother' *aapa / aapi* (in Urdu) 'sister' were observed. It is also common among students to use English kinship terms, but they were limited to *bro / brother* and *sis / sister*. The use of kinship among students shows cohesion and intimacy between blood relatives. Their usage indicates some semantic differences from English. For instance, the semantics of native kinship terms *ada / bha* (in Sindhi) or *bhai* (in Urdu) 'brother' is more sensitive and a token of deeper mutual intimacy than English *bro / brother*. In informal contexts, the use of English kinship terms is considered an Anglo-centric inclination of the user in some cases. Hence, students tend to use native kinship terms in both formal and informal situations to reflect their socio-cultural values in communication. Teachers also address students with kinship terms. The analysis of such situations is based on the author's observation as a 'native' member of the culture, and as someone who has been studying and experiencing such uses from time to time while teaching at a Pakistani university. One can observe the usage of kinship terms by multilingua teachers in addressing students frequently in different situations. The use of kinship terms in multilingual settings corroborates with studies which argue that kinship terms replace names in contexts where increased respect and formality are required [22; 23].

The findings showed that it is not uncommon the use of endearment terms by students in different contexts which demonstrate friendliness and intimacy. They use the only English term 'dear' while native terms seem to be more variable, e. g. *mitha / jani* (in Sindhi) 'beloved', *yar / yaar* (in Sindhi and Urdu) 'close-friend'. In this category students' reliance on native endearment terms increased and on English terms decreased. The use of *yar / yaar* fulfills the interlocutors' communicative needs that English is unable to accomplish. Semantically *yar / yaar* is 'someone with whom a person shares all life matters i.e. personal, family, and emotional, etc., while the English word *friend* means 'a person I know and like'.

An unexpected usage of English honorifics was observed in the data. This category is used often for teachers and office bearers. However, it was observed that students also used the English honorifics *Mr/Miss* to each other, though not often (5.2%). In our opinion students use English honorifics to demonstrate Anglicized behavior to the addressee. From teachers' point of view, it is not uncommon to observe English honorifics among students, teachers also may use them to address students in some cases but not often. Students may perceive the address *Mr/Miss* from teachers as sarcasm in some situations.

The data analysis showed the usage of titles *senior* and *junior* among students, who were studying in their first to the fourth year of studies. This trend shows that students prefer in their communication to show respect and honour together. The title among students is a common tendency to show the importance of hierarchy among them, despite bearing no social power. Students employing titles tend to show socio-cultural peculiarities and adherence to native values in university settings.

Caste is another important category that was observed as an address term used by students. Caste is a common marker of identity in Pakistani lingua-culture. One can observe the usage of caste (e. g. *Soomro, Qureshi, Talpur*) by students addressing each other, as well as their teachers. From personal observation, students tend to employ caste as an address term for teachers in informal situations. Whereas, in formal contexts, students prefer to attach first names with caste for instance *Rizwan Soomro*, or honorific as *Sir Soomro*. Hence, it is important to mention that caste among interlocutors is a marker of Pakistani native values that indicates nearness, mutual respect, and deeper understanding in different formal and informal contexts. Moreover, teachers tend not to address students with the caste term to maintain

a distance in formal contexts, whereas, in rare cases, that could be possible, especially when teachers want to show or build trust and mutual understanding.

The last category observed was zero address form noticed in all contexts in students' data. The results show that some interlocutors limit themselves to greetings *Hi/Hello*, and attention getter *Excuse me* to avoid nominal address forms.

In line with the results, it can be summarised that Pakistani university students and teachers employ several categories of address forms when communicating with each other. However, some nominal variations were noticed in the preferences between English and native categories. Among all categories, names and kinship terms appear to be domineering categories.

Concluding remarks

The goal of this study was to define the main categories of address forms used in Pakistani English in a multilingual academic setting and identify the socio-cultural factors that determine their choice and preference in various contexts, both formal and informal.

The results reveal that students and teachers in multilingual settings of Pakistani universities employ a variety of categories and speaking English they use both English and local terms of address to express their values, identity, and attitudes. Among all categories, first names were the most frequent, followed by kinship terms. Moreover, endearment terms, honorifics, titles, caste terms of address, and zero address forms were also used. The choice of an address term was based on interlocutors' relations, formality level, age, and other contextual factors.

The findings have shown some culture-specific features of address forms and the impact of culture and cultural values on their choice. The closeness of relations on the one hand and respect for those who are elder are frequently expressed by kinship terms (e. g. *ada / bha* (in Sindhi) 'brother' or *aapa / aapi* (in Urdu) 'sister'). The findings indicate a strong sensitivity of Pakistani students to age differences (even when they are one or two years older/younger) and asymmetry of relations which result in such address forms as *senior* and *junior*, and honorifics *Mr/Miss* which are commonly employed for the person bearing an official rank. The significant power distance characteristic of Pakistani society and the value of status and age is manifested in the high level of formality observed in addressing a teacher by students.

The findings demonstrate a frequent use of native terms of address borrowed from local languages. They are markers of lingua-cultural identity and enable speakers to convey values of their culture. Native terms of address are mostly used in informal contexts while English forms of address are predominantly used in formal contexts.

The study provides some new facts concerning the impact of local languages and culture on Pakistani English, namely the forms of address and their functioning. Once again it confirms the fact that "each variety is underpinned by its linguaculture, which means it is able to express the cultural identity of its users and has certain features transferred from their mother tongues and/or other languages that are in regular contact with this variety" [24. P. 526].

The results may contribute to further study of address forms from socio-pragmatic and socio-cultural perspectives. The findings can be implied in World Englishes paradigm, cultural linguistics, cross-cultural pragmatics, as well as intercultural communication, and second-language teaching.

The paper has some limitations related to the contexts and material. Further studies intend to investigate address forms in student-teacher and teacher-student interactions in more detail and with a particular emphasis on discursive practices.

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