Signaling Politeness, Power and Solidarity through Terms of Address in Dagbanli

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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that the linguistic forms used by speakers to address or refer to each other also send different social and cultural meanings such as the type of relationships between speaker and addressee, or the attitude of speaker towards addressee. In this paper I identify the key linguistic components in Dagbanli address forms: kinship terms, names, and titles and discuss the social and cultural values attached to each. I outline the different ways in which these elements are combined not only for the purpose of identifying the addressee or referent, but also for communicating other social meanings and attitudes like politeness, power and solidarity.

Keywords: address terms, kinship, politeness, social deixis, power and solidarity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The linguistic choices available for a speaker of Dagbanli to address another are influenced by three social variables: kinship, age and sex. These variables set up hierarchical relations between interactants. The kinship system gives people in some kin positions certain rights and privileges over others in other kin positions. Older persons have a higher status than younger persons, and wives are subordinate to their husbands. These hierarchical relations are expressed and reinforced through different socio-cultural institutions and practices including linguistic forms and behavior. The mode of address is an example of the linguistic forms that express such hierarchical and other relations. The data for this paper is drawn largely from my personal knowledge of the Dagomba kin system as well as from interviews I conducted with a number of household and family heads in my hometown of Savelugu in Northern Ghana.

The household or *yili*, is the basic unit of Dagomba social organization. It is a polygynous and extended family comprising the head and his wife or wives and their children living within a single compound unit. If the head has married adult sons their wives and children will also live in the same compound. The *yili* may also include the head's brothers and their wives, his sisters (if they are not married) and sometimes younger foster relations of his wife or wives (Oppong 1973: 29). Learning the acceptable modes of addressing or referring to this mix of relations is an important part of the socialization process of every child growing up in a Dagomba household.

When two kinsfolk meet for the first time and are being introduced by a third party who knows both well, care is taken to trace the exact links in their relationship. This makes each aware of the exact kin obligations between them, and particularly how to address each other because kin terms are an important element in Dagomba address forms. They are used to address all kinsfolk who are older than oneself, so knowing precisely how one is related to another is essential. Kin terms are also used when addressing non-kinsfolk who are older than speaker.

2. THE DAGOMBA

The Dagomba belong to the Mole-Dagbani sub-group of the Gur speaking people found in the three northern regions of Ghana and in the south east of Burkina Faso. The Mole-Dagbani includes the Dagomba, the Mamprusi and the Nanumba in the Northern region of Ghana and the Mossi in Burkuna Faso (Naden 1986, Olawsky 1996). The Dagomba homeland, which they call Dagbon, is located in the central part of the Northern Region of Ghana, roughly between latitudes 9° N and 10° N, and covers an area of about 15,360 square kilometers. The people call themselves *Dagbamba*, (singular: *Dagbana*), but *Dagomba*[1] is the form used by non-natives and in the literature in English. This is probably because the form 'Dagomba' was the closest the non-native speakers who first wrote about the people could come to representing the native pronunciation. The Dagomba call their language *Dagbanli*, but, like their name, the language is commonly referred to by non-natives as *Dagbani* or *Dagbane.* In this paper I use *Dagomba* when I refer to people and *Dagbanli* for the language.[2]

According to the 2000 population figures the Dagomba sub-group represents 65.4% of the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group in the Northern Region[3]. The principal towns of the Dagomba are Tamale, which is also the administrative capital of the Northern Region, and Yendi, the traditional capital of the Dagomba and seat of the King of Dagbon. Other big settlements are Savelugu, Kumbungu, Gushegu, Tolon, Karaga and Diare.

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[1] There is variation in the plural form of *Dagomba* – both *Dagombas* and *Dagomba* are found in usage.

[2] Dagbanli is the mother tongue of about 650,000 speakers (Olawsky 1996). Gordon (2005) puts the total number of speakers at 800,000, but he does not make it clear whether this figure represents mother tongue speakers only or includes non-native speakers.

[3] At the time of writing, the summary of the 2010 Population and Housing Census results showing regional figures had been released, but the break down of the regional figures were not yet available.

2.1 SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION AND HIERARCHY

To be able to better appreciate the norms of Dagomba address forms one needs to look at a key principle that governs social interaction among the people. This is the principle of social differentiation based on hierarchies built around the three variables: sex, age and status. Sex and age are salient in almost every situation and social activity in which the Dagomba are engaged, whether it is in the smallest kin unit represented by the household or at the community level.

2.1.1 Differentiation by Sex

Within the traditional compound of the household described above, men and women have separate living quarters. The women's rooms usually enclose an inner yard where they spend most of the day performing their domestic chores or chatting with other women who visit. The men's quarters are usually located in an outer section of the compound. They spend most of their time with other men in the large reception hall or outside in the open space. On occasions when the two sexes have to be present at the same scene together, the women scrupulously avoid mixing with the men.

2.1.2 Differentiation by Age

Next in importance to sex differentiation is age differentiation, considered primarily in chronological terms (Naden 1986). Seniority in age commands a lot of prestige, respect and positive self-image and, in a society where until recently the documentation of births and deaths was an indulgence of the few educated, it is not uncommon to see people arguing over seniority. Age differences are reflected in seating arrangements within the two sex groups. Among the men, the elderly sit together with the most senior in age occupying the most prominent place. If younger men are present they sit together and away from the elders; boys and children are not allowed to come near when serious matters are being discussed. The only factor that may place a younger person among elders is the possession of a chiefship title (see sections 5.3. and 5.3.1. below). A relatively young person who is a chief or holds a title may sit with the elderly. In the inner yard the most senior women sit together inside the rooms, whilst the younger women do the cooking or sit together in the open yard.

Leadership of and responsibility for any group goes naturally to the oldest person, and all members defer to him or her. To deal with a group of people, one engages with the eldest, who remains the principal contact with the group. An outsider must therefore first find out from group members who the eldest is. If, for any reason, this is not done the members will repair the breach by redirecting the new-comer to the senior person.

2.1.3 Status Differentiation

A third variable in social differentiation among the Dagomba is status. Status here refers to a position or office usually identified by a title which a person acquires or inherits and the possession of which entitles the holder to certain degrees of privilege and prestige. Different types of titles are available to the Dagomba (these are discussed below). The possession of a title confers on the holder a higher status than a person without one, a man has a higher status than a woman of the same age and a husband has a higher status than his wife, even if (in a rare event) the woman is older. In verbal interaction respect and deference must be shown to those older than oneself and to people of higher status. When a younger person greets or responds to the greeting of an older person, he or she does so lowering the body and gaze, genuflecting or going down on one knee; (women go down on both). A new arrival greets first, beginning, as with other acts, with the older person(s) down to the younger ones (see Naden, 1986). A younger person must avoid using confrontational or argumentative speech to an older person, or telling an older person that he or she is lying, even when it is very obvious that what the latter is saying is contrary to the fact. '*Bia b' yeri ninkurugu ni o ŋmari ʒiri*' (A child does not tell an elder that he is lying) is what every child is taught early in life. Instead, the child is taught to use a euphemism like '*A yohindimi'*; ('you are being jokeful', 'you don't mean it'), or any strategy that will not attack the integrity of the older person, or make him or her lose face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). But even before the child learns all these ways of showing respect to the elderly, he or she is taught the most basic speech forms for initiating a successful conversation: (1) greeting and (2) addressing or referring to older people appropriately, the latter being the subject of this paper.

The basic norm for addressing or referring to an older person or a person of higher status is the avoidance of mentioning the name 'without qualification' (Dakubu 2000: 54) i.e. without attaching to it one of the elements that will be discussed below. Modes of address, as Dakubu observes, are 'keyed to the social hierarchy, which is viewed as an extension of the kinship hierarchy (Dakubu 2000: 63). The name of an older or higher status person must be preceded by a kin term whether speaker and addressee are kin relations or not. An older person may however address a younger person by name only. Titles alone or in combination with kin terms are also used.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It has been observed that the best place to look for a correspondence between language and society in the grammar of a language is in the pronouns and forms of address. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), probably all languages encode deference in generalized forms of address. Thus address forms have been of great interest to sociolinguists and anthropologists, because these forms can

conspicuously manifest the relationship between language and social relations (Brown and Levinson 1987; Hudson 2001; Wardhaugh 1992). Chaika (1982) notes that the tone or style of a conversation is heavily marked at the outset by introductory acts like summons, greetings, and form of address. These forms function as 'social selectors' and powerful controllers of interaction (Chaika 1982: 46), and together they can signal a relationship of power or solidarity. In this paper I shall attempt to discuss Dagbanli address terms under the frameworks of social deixis, politeness, and power and solidarity.

3.1 SOCIAL DEIXIS

According to Fillmore (1975, cited in Levinson 1983) social deixis concerns those aspects of language structure that encode the social identities of participants, or the social relationship between them, or between one of them and persons and entities referred to. Hudson (2001: 120) also refers to 'linguistic items that reflect social characteristics of the speaker, of the addressee or of the relation between them'. Social relations may be expressed in several ways in language, but Levinson (1983) limits the notion of social deixis to aspects of the social relationship holding between speaker and addressee and which are grammaticalized in language. The options available to address a conversational partner as *sir* or *mate* in British English, or *tu* or *vous* in French are examples of social deixis (Brown and Levinson 1987, Wardhaugh 1992) as well as forms that indicate how the addresser relates to the addressee socially or emotively. The choices a speaker makes indicate the social relationship that the speaker perceives to exist between him or her and the listener or listeners (Rühlemann 2007: 185).

3.2 POLITENESS

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 46) 'the most conspicuous intrusion of social factors into language structure' is deference phenomena. They observe that deference is realized under the general theory of politeness and involves paying attention to the 'face want' of the addressee. 'Face' is described as the 'public self image' that all rational adult members have when engaged in spoken interaction. Face consists of two related aspects; positive face and negative face. Positive face includes the want that one's self image be appreciated and approved, whilst negative face is the claim of every 'competent adult member' to personal preserves, non-distraction and freedom from imposition, and to the desire that their actions be unimpeded by others. Both negative and positive face needs of participants in interaction are constantly under threat by various acts or omissions of other participants. Face is therefore highly valued; it can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly adhered to in interaction. As we

communicate with others, we are constantly aware of our own and others' face needs, we attend to it consciously or unconsciously, and we cooperate to maintain one another's face (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62). We attempt to soften utterances or acts that will threaten the face needs of the other, i.e. face threatening acts (FTAs) by using a variety of politeness strategies, including address terms. Sometimes either consciously or unconsciously we do FTA's, i.e. we say things that threaten the other's face.

3.3 POWER AND SOLIDARITY

Another type of social relations encoded in language is social distance or closeness between individuals, or relations of 'power' and 'solidarity'. Brown and Gilman (1960) argue that in some European languages, beyond the deictic functions of the second person pronouns *tu* (T) or *vous* (V), there are in the choice of either pronoun, signals of relationships of 'power' and 'solidarity', where 'power' reflects relative superior status, social distance, unfamiliarity, and deference, and 'solidarity' reflects closeness, familiarity, common experiences and shared intimacies. Shared relationship of solidarity or differences in power relationships are reflected in reciprocal or non-reciprocal use of the T/V pronouns in address (Brown and Gilman 1960, Chaika 1982, Trudgill 1983). According to Hudson (2001) every language has some way of signaling relationships of power and solidarity, and languages that do not show the T/V distinction may have other devices to signal these relations, as in English, where speakers have the choice between first name only and title plus family name (Hudson, 2001: 123). These frameworks provide a useful perspective for the analysis of Dagomba address forms.

4. LITERATURE

There is no previous study of Dagbanli address forms, but in an analysis of Dagomba personal names Dakubu (2000) briefly discusses modes of address and use of titles. There is however substantial information on Dagomba social organization, kinship system and socialization processes from works such as Rattray, 1932, Oppong 1973, Staniland 1975, Naden 1976, and Nabila 2000). Naden in particular provides a list of kinship terminologies and discusses kin relations of different peoples of Northern Ghana including the Dagomba. His emphasis however is on relations and obligations as they are mediated by blood ties and by marriage. In other studies, Naden (1983a, 1983b, 1986) deals with the interplay between social and cultural values and aspects of language use like greeting and speaking among the Mampursi, who are close relations of the Dagomba. Wilson (1972) describes some aspects of conversational etiquette in Dagbanli, in particular the importance of greetings as an essential entrance into

any conversation, but he is silent on address forms, which is as essential to the success of a conversation as the greeting. It is my hope that this paper will fill this gap, even as it complements Dakubu's (2000) work on Dagomba names by looking also at the social and cultural meanings of politeness, power and solidarity indexed by Dagbanli address forms

Rühlemann, (2007) has noted that the address, like a vocative, often marks the entrance to an interactional event and marks out the interactional position or 'stance' of the speaker. An inappropriate mode of address, like the absence of a greeting can, in a Dagomba context, jeopardize the chances of success of the interaction. I shall begin by first looking at the key elements in Dagbanli address forms. These are: (1) name, (2) kinship/relation term and, (3) title. A person may be addressed by any one of these or by various combinations of these depending on a number of the social variables discussed above, i.e. age and social status and other pragmatic considerations. I shall describe each of these in turn before I examine how they may be combined in different ways for various purposes.

5. ELEMENTS OF DAGOMBA ADDRESS FORMS

5.1 NAMES

Names, naming and address practices are closely linked because names are available not only for identifying people, but also for addressing them (Hudson, 2001). A discussion of one cannot avoid the mention of the other as Dakubu (2000) shows in analyzing Dagomba names. I shall thus look at Dagomba names and naming practices before discussing their use in address forms.

The Dagomba have two types of names: traditional names and Islamic names. Traditional names are in the Dagbanli language and were given under traditional naming ceremonies whilst Islamic names are derived from Arabic and are given under Islamic naming ceremonies borrowed from the Hausa (Dakubu 2000). Every new-born Dagomba child is called *saandoo* (stranger man) or *saampaga* (stranger woman) until the seventh day after birth when it is given a name by the father or family head[4]. Dagomba families are not distinguished by 'family' names, but for purposes of documentation, the name of the father, family head or guardian is added to the given name as the surname. Where a person is named after an ancestor, the name so given becomes his or her own too, the only name he or she bears. The Dagomba do not have day

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[4]   For one reason or another that we need not go into here, a father may later change a child's name, or the individual may change his or her name. In the past some people who had traditional names replaced them with Islamic names upon embracing the religion. In recent times however the Dagomba seem to have rediscovered a pride in traditional names, and now when they name their children, they add a traditional name to the Muslim name. One may add also that Dagomba women do not have to change their names when they marry. Like every one else they keep their given names for life unless they acquire a title.

names which attach automatically to a person in respect of the day on which he or she is born, and to which a second or third name may be added, as the Akan and other peoples of Southern Ghana do (Agyekum, 2006).[5] A person may later acquire a nickname or a title by which he or she may be addressed or referred to, but second or additional names were not common among Dagombas until recently.[6] Many Dagombas however now give their children a traditional name in addition to an Islamic name, whilst Dagomba Christians also take 'Christian' or English names.

The absence of practices of multiple naming among the Dagomba and generally among the peoples of Northern Ghana was reflected, in the past, in a tendency among some non-literates from Northern Ghana, of attaching ethnic labels to their names for the purposes of documentation, for example Salifu *Dagarti,* Atia *Frafra,* Aburago *Kusasi*, Alhassan *Dagomba,* etc. where Dagarti, Frafra and Kusasi are all ethnic groups in Northern Ghana like Dagomba.

5.2 KINSHIP TERMS

Dakubu (2000) has observed that among the Dagomba (as in other societies), modes of address are 'keyed to the social hierarchy, which is an extension of the kinship hierarchy' (2000: 63). Though other relations that exist between people may determine status, the primary means of ordering status hierarchies among the Dagomba is age. Superior age accords superior social status. In this paper, I shall therefore use the term 'superior kin' to refer to all kin relations who are older than speaker.

5.2.1 Superior Kin

Superior kin include *yaba* (grandfather), (*yab*)*paga* (grand mother) *ma* (mother)*, ba* (father), *bakpema* ('senior father', i.e. father's older brother/cousin), *bapira* ('junior father', i.e. father's younger brother/cousin), *makpema* ('senior mother', i.e. mother's older sister/cousin) *mapira* ('junior mother', i.e. mother's younger sister/cousin)*, pirba* (father's younger or older sister/cousin), *ŋahiba*, (mother's younger or older brother/cousin), *beli* (older brother/older sister/older cousin, etc), (see table below). In Dagomba culture any person older than speaker must not be addressed by name alone. Thus, a kin relation who is older than speaker

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5   There are a few names that correspond to some of the days of the week, but where these are chosen they are given as personal names like any other personal name.

6   Dakubu (2000) refers to the name given to a child by the father as 'primary' name (p. 55). This is probably to distinguish the given name from a 'by-name' or nick name. Dagombas themselves make the following distinctions: the given name or primary name may be referred to as *yu' maŋli* ('real' name), or *dogim yuli* (birth name) or *suuna yuli* (*suuna* name – the name given in an Islamic ceremony) as opposed to *yu' paa* (nickname) or *nam* (title used as a name).

must not be addressed by name alone but by a kin term, either alone or with the name. I shall call kin terms used to address superior kin, 'superior kin terms'. Thus a kin term is 'superior' if it is obligatorily used to address or refer to a person who stands in the kin relation indicated by the term.

The problem with this definition is that kin superiority does not only derive from superior age but can also derive from generational seniority. A younger person may be in a superior kin position if for instance he or she is a sibling of speaker's parent and thus belongs to the parent's generation. Thus a *bapira*, (father's younger brother/cousin) *pirba*, (father's younger sister/cousin) *mapira* (mother's younger sister/cousin) or *ŋahiba* (mother's younger brother/cousin) may be younger than speaker. In such cases the superior age of speaker attenuates the kinship address term obligation, allowing speaker to use or not use the kin term in address. In deed where the age difference is big, the younger but superior kin person defers to the superior age status of the other and uses a kin term to address the inferior kin . There is often a reciprocal use of kin terms between these people.[7]

5.2.2 Inferior Kin

Inferior kin will refer to all kin who are younger than speaker and hence have inferior social status. There are four inferior kin positions: *bia* (son/daughter/nephew/niece)*, tuzo* (younger brother/sister/cousin/), *ŋahiŋga* (nephew/niece) and *yaaŋga* (grandson/daughter/nephew/niece). Persons in these positions are not obligatorily addressed by a kin term. Terms that refer to these positions will be called inferior kin terms. A *ŋahiŋga* or *bia*, though inferior kin, may be of superior age and has to be accorded the necessary deference in address. Inferior kin terms are hardly used as address terms except by an adult person who may use it to address a younger person when both are strangers to each other and the adult does not know the name of the younger person (see section *6.1.2.).*

5.2.3 Scope of Reference of Kin Terms

The scope of reference of a Dagbanli kin term includes a much wider group of people than its equivalent term in English does. In Dagbanli *ma* (mother) and *ba* (father), do not only refer to one's biological parents. Every individual has several fathers and mothers. A father's brothers, half brothers, and cousins are all fathers (*banima*, plural of *ba*), and a mother's sisters, half sisters and cousins, as well as father's wives are mothers (*manima*, plural of *ma*). Very often, the

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7   For instance, one of my older half-sisters has two sons both of who are older than me. Because of my superior kin position one addresses me with the English 'uncle', whilst the other, who is non literate uses the Dagbanli *Ŋahiba*. In turn, because of their superior age, I address the one as Mr. Seidu and the other by his trade description *Nakɔ ha* (butcher) thus avoiding name only address.

finer distinctions between *bakpema* (father's older brother), *bapira* (father's younger brother), *makpema* (mother's older sister), *mapira* (mother's younger sister) are dispensed of, and the undifferentiated terms *ba* and *ma* are used when these people are addressed directly[8].

Figure 1. *List of Dagbanli kin terms.*

Superior kin terms		*English equivalent*	Inferior kin terms	*English equivalents*
ma	mother	*Mother*		*son/daughter*
ba	father	*Father*	**bia**	
beli	older sister/ older brother father's wife's son/daughter	*brother/sister half brother/half sister*	**tuzo**	*younger brother/sister younger half brother/ half sister*
	father's brother's son/ daughter	*cousin*		*cousin*
	father's sister's son/ daughter	*cousin*		
	mother's sister's son/ daughter	*cousin*		
	mother's brother's son/ daughter	*cousin*		
	father's half brother's son/daughter, etc.	*cousin*		
bakpema **bapira***	father's older brother/half brother/cousin, etc. (senior father) father's younger brother/cousin (junior father)	*uncle* *uncle*	**bia**	*son/daughter* *son/daughter*
pirba*	father's sister (older/younger)	*Aunt*	**bia**	*son/daughter*
makpema **mapira***	mother's older sister (senior mother) mother's younger sister (junior mother)	*aunt* *aunt*	**bia** **bia**	*son/daughter*
ŋahiba*	mother's brother (older/younger*)*	*Uncle*	**ŋahiŋga**	*nephew/niece*
Yaba (yab')paga	father's/mother's father father's mother's mother	*grandfather* *grandmother*	**yaaŋga** **yaaŋga**	*grandson/ granddaughter*

*Superior kin who may be inferior in age to self.

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8   Parents' siblings of the same sex must be distinguished by age but siblings of the opposite sex are not. Thus there is a distinction between *bakpema* (father's older brother) and *bapira* (father's younger brother), but father's female siblings (older or younger) are both referred to by the single term *pirba*. On the other hand, there is a distinction between mother's older sister *makpema* and mother's younger sister *mapira*, but one term *ŋahiba* for mother's older or younger male siblings.

As shown in Figure 1 above, the individual is also *bia* (son/daughter) to all the different 'mothers' and 'fathers'. Similarly *beli* (older brother/sister) is used to refer to or address not only one's older siblings but also all older half brothers, half sisters, and older cousins, and the terms *yaba/yab' paga* (grand father/mother) include not only the biological parents of one's father and mother but the grand parents' siblings and cousins.

5.2.4 Affinal Relations

A wife does not address her husband by name alone; she must use a superior kin term or a title if he has one, because a husband is a social superior, even in the rare event that he is younger than the woman. Husband and wife address each other's parents as *ma* (mother) and *ba* (father) alone or with name or title. Besides the father- and mother-in-law, a husband addresses all other relations of his wife following the general norms for addressing, i.e. qualifying the names of in-laws who are older or have titles with a superior kin term or the title of the addressee. A wife follows the same rules when addressing in-laws who are older than herself, and uses name alone to address in-laws who are younger than herself. Generally, a wife is considered to stand in the same kin relationship as her husband to individuals in the husband's kin group. However, younger kin relations of the husband (like siblings, nieces and cousins) who the husband addresses by name alone may be older than the wife, and so whilst the man will address these by name alone the woman will address them with a kin term.

5.2.5 Outside the Kin Group

Persons outside one's kin group are addressed on the basis of their comparable ages to one's kin relations. An individual who is or appears to be close to one's parents in age is addressed as *ba* or *ma*, a person in the older brother's/sister's age group is addressed as *beli* and so on. Since people's ages are not clearly apparent, one takes a cue of how to address an older person from the way he or she is addressed by those close to you. If your father addresses a stranger as *ba* (father) you know you cannot address him as *beli* (older brother) or *ba* too. Where such a cue is not available, any of the superior kin terms may be used, with due attention to the addressee's relative age. Non-related adults who are strangers to each other tend to show mutual respect by reciprocal use of superior kin terms.[9]

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[9]   The choice of kin terms by strangers to each other is influenced by the sex of the speaker. Men tend to address other adult strangers of both sexes as father's kin, whilst women address adult strangers as mother's kin. Thus an adult male will address another adult male as *bapira* (father's younger brother) and an adult female as *pirba* (father's sister), whilst an adult female addresses an adult male stranger as *ŋahiba* (mother's brother) and a female as *mapira* (mother's sister).

5.3 TITLES

Titles are the third element in Dagomba address forms. A title is called *nam*, which may be translated as 'chiefship'. *Nam* may refer to the traditional position of a chief (*Naa*), a sub-chief, an elder in the chief's court or the head of a professional or social group other than a kinship group. *Nam* is also used for modern political positions like the position of President or District Chief Executive (or DCE). Four types of titles occur in Dagomba address forms: traditional, Islamic, descriptive or occupational, and English titles.

5.3.1 Traditional Titles

Traditional titles (*nam*) are designations for chiefs, elders and other honorary positions. Most traditional titles name the place of which the holder is chief or the position he or she holds plus the element *-na* or *-lana*, (sometimes written separately or affixed to the place name) meaning 'chief of', 'owner of' or 'in-charge of', for example *Tolon Na* (chief of Tolon), *Zosali Lana*, (chief of Zosali) (see also Dakubu, 2000). Chiefs are addressed by the royal honorific *Naa*, but are referred to by their titles, e.g. *Nanton Na, Saakpili Lana.* The personal name is added in referring to a chief only when it is necessary to distinguish between persons who have occupied the same *nam* e.g. *Tolon Na* Yakubu**,** *Tolon Na* Sulemana or *Zugu Lana* Mahamaru, *Zugu Lana* Salifu. Elders and other title holders are addressed and referred to by their title, e.g. *Zagyurna, Wulana.* Like the chief the name is added to the elder's title to distinguish between persons who have held the same position.

5.3.2 Islamic Titles

The Muslim clergy in Dagbon also have a number hierarchical offices and titles, which must be used to address holders. Besides these, any adult male Muslim who has completed the Quranic training earns the title *afa* (or the Hausa *Mallam*), which to the Dagomba is the equivalent of the title 'Mr.' *Alhaji* and *Hajia* are used respectively as titles for males and females who have performed the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

5.3.3 Descriptive Titles

Any occupation, trade or activity one is engaged in becomes a form of address or reference or a title. These include both traditional and modern occupations. A traditional drummer, *luŋa,* whose name is Issa may be referred to or addressed as *Luŋ' Issa* or simply *Luŋa*; the woman who cooks and sells cereal porridge (*koko*) will be referred to and addressed as *kokolana*, the baker or bread seller

boroborolana, and so will the driver (*drava*), carpenter (*kaapinta*), tailor (*teila*), etc.

5.3.4 English Titles

The English *Mr.* (pronounced 'mista' or 'misa' by the non-literate) is used for educated adult males and, occasionally, *madam* for educated women. *Miss* and *Mrs.* are hardly used in Dagbanli. Common professions like *teacher* (ticha), *doctor* (dokta), *lawyer* (looya), and titles such as *professor* (prɔfesa), *corporal* (kopuru), *sergeant* (saadʒe), etc. also occur alone or with name of addressee, but not *nurse*.

5.3.5 Using Titles

Whatever its type, a title is a highly valued status marker among the Dagomba. It confers various forms of authority or prestige on the holder including political, territorial, religious, economic or social authority, or it may be simply a mark of honour, without any authority whatsoever. A title must not be omitted when addressing or referring to anyone who has one[10]. In addressing, a title may be used alone, with name, or with a kin term depending on the relationship between speaker and addressee as outlined in the next section.

6. RULES OF ADDRESS

The rules for addressing others in Dagbanli may be formally presented as follows:

(i)   Do not address or refer to an older person, whether a relation or not, by his or her name alone.

(ii)   Address kin who are older than you by the kin term that marks his or her relationship to you, or use a title if he or she has one.

(iii)   Address those of the same age as you or those younger than you, whether they are kin or non kin, by name alone or use a title.

(iv)   Address an older person who is not a kin relation with a kin term as you would use for a kin of the same or equivalent age, or use a title if he or she has one.

These four basic rules offer the speaker a number of choices for addressing or referring to both kin and non kin as shown in situations 1–3 below. The symbol

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[10]   There are countless real life stories of people refusing to respond to their names or openly voicing their displeasure at having been addressed without their title.

Y = younger person and **O** = older person; the arrow ➔ shows direction of the address in a situation where;

1.   a younger person **Y** addresses older person **O**; **Y ➔ O**,
2.   an older person **O** addresses a younger person **Y**; **O ➔ Y**, and
3.   a person addresses another person of the same age; **Y ➔Y** or **O ➔O**

The elements in the address form are represented as **Kt** (kin term); **N** (Name) **T** (title) and **Ø** (zero element).The address situations and the choices available are:

1.   **Y ➔ O**

(a)	**Kt + N**	*M mapir' Napaga*	my junior mother Napaga
		M be Dawuni	my elder brother Dawuni
(b)	**Kt + Ø**	*M mapira*	my junior mother
		M beli	my elder brother/sister
(c)	**Kt + T**	*M ma Hajia*	my mother Hajia
		M ba Wulana	my father *Wulana*
(d)	**T + N**	Alhaji Sulemana	Alhaji Sulemana
		Looya Dajia	Lawyer Dajia
(e)	**T + Ø**	*Alhaji*	Alhaji

2.   **O ➔ Y**

(a)	**Ø + N**	*Dawuni*	Dawuni
(b)	**T + N**	*Alhaji Sulemana*	Alhaji Sulemena
(c)	**T + Ø**	Alhaji	Alhaji
		Tua Naa	Tua Naa
		Ticha	Teacher
		Hajia	Hajia

3.   **Y ➔Y; O ➔O**

(a)	**Ø + N**	*Yisa*	Yisa
(b)	**T + N**	*Misa Ablai*	Mr. Ablai
		Madam Afi	Madam Afi
(c)	**T + Ø**	*Tua Naa*	Tua Naa

6.1 DISCUSSION

6.1.1 Y → O

It will be observed that in situation (**1**) **Y → O** the elements **Kt** and **T** are obligatory; at least one of the two must be used at all times and in one case both can be used together as in **1c** conforming to rule **ii** and **iv** for kin or non kin. The address option **Ø + N** (name only) is not available in this situation, which also conforms to the norm that one does not address an older person by name only (rule i). Using **Ø + N** is a non-acknowledgement of **O**'s superior kin or age status and a threat to his or her positive face, i.e. denying to **O** the prestige attached to superior age. On the other hand the many options for the use of **Kt** (**1a, 1b, 1c**), and **T** (**1c,1d,1e**) underscores the importance of the two elements in Dagbanli address forms. In using them the speaker is attending to the positive face of addressee, recognizing him or her as a superior kin, a holder of a title, or both as in **1c** (**Kt** + **T**: *M ma Hajia* - my mother Hajia). In this example the addressee is not the biological mother of speaker, but any one of several 'mothers'; a biological mother will be addresses simply as *M ma* or *Hajia.*

Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 335) have observed that linguistic features index or point to more than one dimension of the sociocultural context; 'indexing of certain dimensions is linked in a constitutive sense to the indexing of other dimensions'. Kin relationships carry different types of rights, obligations and privileges. Lydall (1999) notes that each relationship term evokes certain feelings, expectations, rights and duties, hopes and fears associated with the particular relationship, and that the reiteration of kin relations through **Kt** address forms reminds speaker and addressee of the kin ties and obligations that hold between them as kin, and strengthens those relations. **Kt**'s index solidarity between kinsfolk because kin are expected to help and be helped; thus obligations, duties and rights define kin relations (Schusky 1974). At the same time **Kt's** also signify the power of the superior kin, for as Oppong (1973) observes, not even sibling relations make a younger sibling equal to an older sibling and the former must use the **Kt** *mbeli* when addressing his or her older siblings and concede precedence to him or her. The use of **Kt** to an older non kin member attends to addressee's positive face by recognizing his or her superior age and the deference and privileges of a social superior.

6.1.2 O→ Y and Y→Y; O→O

Kt is not used in situations 2 and 3 where and older person addresses a younger person or persons of the same age address each other as indicated by rule iii. When a Kt is used to address a person who considers him or herself to be younger than the speaker the reaction is often a protest from the addressee because the address will be considered an imposition of a status not deserved and hence a threat to his or her negative face (Brown and Gilman 1960). Title

alone (T + Ø), title with name (T + N), or name only (Ø +N) may be used in both situations. In 2 (O→Y) the use of name only (Ø +N) directly signals the superiority of speaker whilst at the same time it is an index of power, because only an older person or a superior kin may address a younger person or inferior kin by name alone. In 3 the use of the same address form (Ø + N) is reciprocal between people of the same age and indexes solidarity (not power), shared age status, just like the reciprocal use of *Vous* among superiors and *Tu* among social inferiors in those languages in which these distinctions were relevant (Brown and Levinson 1987; Hudson 2001; Wardhaugh 1992).

We have made it clear that a younger person never uses name alone to address an older person whether the two are related or not; not even when they are strangers to each other. An older person can address a younger person by name alone but where the two are strangers to each other the older person may use an inferior kin term. This is the only situation in which inferior kin terms are used as address forms, and the common terms used are *m bia* (my child) or *n tuzo* (my younger brother/sister). For persons of the same age *zori* (friend) is used. There is however always a risk in the use of *zori* as it has an inherent ambivalence in indexing either genuine camaraderie between companions, or distance and hostility depending on the context and the participant's perception of each other. Indeed *zori* is often the address form used when a speaker wishes to warn or dismiss another. A less ambivalent term *n zo* (my friend) is available, but it seems this form of address is preferred by women though this might need an empirical study to confirm. Women also use the term *n nyintaa* (my rival i.e co-wife) to address younger girls who are strangers and this is the terse explanation an elderly woman gave me for this; 'Any unmarried young woman who is neither your relation nor your husband's relation is a potential co-wife, because a Dagomba man can marry many wives.'[11]

6.1.2.1   A Note on Titles

A point of interest that must be made about titles (**T**) is that it is the only element that occurs in all three situations. It appears in **1c**, **d** and **e**, **2b** and **c**, and **3b** and **c**. The high frequency of **T** arises from its obligatory use when addressing any person who has one, irrespective of the holder's age, and this is an indication of the importance of titles as status markers in Dagomba culture, a phenomenon that appears to be prevalent in many African cultures. Omitting a person's title is a face threatening act (FTA); a non-recognition of his or her claim to the title and the accompanying status and privileges. People have pointedly refused to acknowledge an address because they have not been addressed by their titles. Sometimes the speaker may be reminded, either by the addressee or by another person of the omission or may be informed, if he or she did not know, that the addressee has such and such a title.

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[11] Personal communication with an elderly woman in Savelugu.

So regular is the use of titles alone in Dagomba address habits as in **1e**, **2c** and **3c** that the real name of a title holder may be known only by those who have known him or her before the acquisition of the title. One may be very well acquainted with a person for several years and know him only by his titles and not his real name.

7. CONCLUSION

Addressing a person with an appropriate address term that befits his or her age or status is one of the norms of speech that make interaction between speakers acceptable. It signals the speaker's attitude towards the addressee and defines the relationship that speaker perceives to exist between him or her and the addressee. Concerns for face and the need to build and maintain valued social relations including power and solidarity in face-to-face interactions compel the Dagomba to use culturally valued linguistic elements like kin terms and titles when addressing or referring to others. The address forms discussed in this paper are generally predictable for people who know one another very well or whose statuses are clearly defined by their age or position. In situations where these variables are not so clearly defined the choices available to speakers are varied and unpredictable and depend on the speaker's attitude towards the addressee or his or her view of the situation. The only well defined relationship that produces unpredictable address forms is the husband-wife relationship. As noted above, a husband in Dagomba society has a higher status than his wife, so a wife cannot address her husband by name alone. However there is no clearly defined term for a wife to use to address husband. Different women use different terms and the term or terms used by a woman to a man may change over time as they transition from mere acquaintances through the courting stage, to a married couple without children, and to a stage when they have children. At each of these stages a woman may have a different term to address the man, and different circumstances in their relationship may also require different terms of address. For instance a woman may address her husband with one term and refer to him in the presence of others as 'my child's/children's father'. It is my hope that this study will generate enough interest in Dagbanli address forms to stimulate further studies into address terms between strangers and especially between husbands and wives.

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