

Name and Politeness: Multiple Address Term among the Igbo

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Abstract

This paper investigates and discusses the aspects of language use among the Igbo as reflected in their name calling practice, which the paper terms name avoidance cum alternative names in term of their classification. The study also assesses who uses the name and to whom. The socio-cultural factors affecting the usage of these alternative names or the euphemistic terms are discussed with the intention of highlighting their pragmatic and cultural importance to the people. The primary data for the study were collected through interview, focus group discussion and observation, while secondary sources of data collection included published materials such as books and journal articles, as well as through intuitive knowledge as native speaker of Igbo. The theoretical framework adopted for the analysis of the study is politeness and face approach as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Politeness is seen as been respectful and considerate of other people, and which is culture base. Findings show that the avoidance of the personal names is conditioned by Igbo cultural and religious norms; and that the alternatives names or euphemistic terms are mostly used as replacements for the avoided lexemes in different contexts by different individuals. The paper argues that name avoidance are common sociolinguistic phenomena among the Igbo people. The use of personal names is being restricted by some people in certain contexts.

Keywords: Name avoidance, politeness, kinship terms, name restriction, and euphemism.

1. Introduction

A name is what is been used in reference to someone or something, it is a source of identity. For the Igbo¹, human names are loaded with sufficient information; historical and cultural, aspirations, desires, achievement, and circumstances surrounding the birth of the child as well as the challenges facing the family. Naming is a significant aspect of human life in general and an essential aspect of people's cultural identity with varied practices. Name provides a window that mirrors the people's socio-cultural assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and worldview (Mensah and Mekamgoun, 2017:2). Names play a significant role in the definition of who the person is. Every individual (young, old, male

¹ Igbo language is one of the major Nigerian languages and a dominant language in the South Eastern part of Nigeria which comprises five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, some Igbo people also dwell in the neighbouring states of Delta, Rivers, and Edo.

and female) has a name given to him at infancy. However, the way the names are been used is of a great important to an average Igbo person. The names are often avoided, especially when one is in face-to-face with the elderly bearer. There is often alternative name(s) used which is based on cultural norms of the people involve. Without the full knowledge of the required or acceptable mode of address, one might commit what we call, “linguistic taboo”.

Linguistic taboos are words that many people consider offensive and can mar interpersonal relationship. According to Chunming (2013), taboo subjects include: body functions about sex and excretion, private parts of the body, illness and death; words believed to be blasphemy; income, salary, age of ladies, etc. Chunming’s list did not include names. However, name in general is not taboo but there is restriction on the use of personal names. That is, not everyone is allowed to call everybody by their first name in all contexts. Taboo items are cultural bound. Ogunwale (2015) opines that naming practices in Africa specifically articulate the preceding aspects of language as they reflect the particular information on the people’s culture. Culture imposes restriction on who call the other by their personal names and who avoids the name but use alternative terms. Name avoidance and replacement is a kind of been polite in addressing people who are older than we are. It is addressing an older person in a way that he will not feel disrespect, belittle or insulted. According to Fakuade at el (2014), people are meant to give respect to a certain class of people: kings, title holders, married and unmarried grown-ups, relations and the elderly. The Igbo people respect the elders, and this is so because it is their belief that the higher one’s status, the higher the honour and respect given to such a person. Just as the elderly and important people are venerated, they can be vilified if they are people of questionable characters. Thus witches, wizards, thieves, kidnappers, ritualists and wicked people are not respected, regardless of their age, they are not honoured with any title or allowed to take titles on their own. Respect they say is reciprocal. In as much as the younger ones are bound by culture to respect their elders, the elders as well show a kind of respect to the younger one. The most obvious way of showing respect among the Igbo is through name avoidance and the use of alternative form of address. The degree of avoidance of certain words in language and by certain people is culture specific. In some western culture, certain words we might consider offensive when used in some contexts may not be so in their culture. In other words, what is offensive among Igbo people may be the norm elsewhere.

Igbo like many other African cultures show respect to elders and using someone’s personal name may be part of being (im)polite and (dis)respectful. To call certain people by their personal names in Igbo culture is not only disrespectful but also a sign that the person has no honour to merit the respect that goes with the alternative names. Name avoidance, and replacement of personal names to euphemistic one is to make the hearer less embarrassed or uncomfortable. In doing so, the people employ politeness strategy. The positive politeness strategy shows you recognize that your hearer has a desire to be respected. It also confirms that the relationship is friendly and expresses group reciprocity. According to Anchimbe (2011:1474), the ways people address one another at first meetings, at work, at home, in informal settings, when angry, when in need, when happy, or when in control, have to do with the “representational” and “social” functions of language.

The main objective of the study is to investigate the politeness terms which are used in place of people's personal names among the Igbo people and to what extent these terms are used for multiple relationship and reference.

2. Previous Studies

There is rich body of literature on names, naming practices and address form in Africa. The investigation on the topic has covered a wide range of disciplines. The studies on this topic include; Obeng (1998), Afful (2006), Agyekum (2006), Adjah (2011), (for naming system in Ghana), Suzman (1994), De Klerk & Bosch (1996), Herbert (1997), Koopman (2002), Moyo (2002), Mashiri (2004), Ngubane & Thabethe (2013), Makondo (2013), and Chauke (2015) (for South African names), Katakami (1997), Olenyo (2011), Marjie-Okyere (2015) (for Kenya), Saarelma-Maunumaa (1996) (for Namibia), and Anchimbe (2011) discusses name-avoidance by Cameroonians.

Coming to Nigeria, there are wide studies on names with varied focus. The works on Ibibio include, Essien (1986), Mensah and Offiong (2013), and Mensah (2015). Yoruba works include, Odudoye (1982), Ogunwale and Bamigbade (2014), and Oyetade (1995). Studies on Igbo names include, Oha (2009), Oyeka (2015), Fakuade et al (2014), Agbo (2014), Onukawa (1998, 1999, 1999b), Mmadike (2014), Asadu and Samson (2014), Emeka-Nwobia (2016), Nwoye (2014), Onumajuru (2016), and host of others.

Oyetade (1995) and Afful (2006) examine address form in Yoruba and Ghana respectively. Afful (2006) describes different address terms used among undergraduates in an English-medium university in Ghana. The study explored the link between address forms and variation in respect of an interlocutor. The data for the study was collected from observation of both spontaneous and deliberative spoken discourse as well as interviews of the university students. The conceptual framework adopted for the study was interactional sociolinguistics and an ethnographic research. The study shows that the key naming practices among students at the University of Cape Coast (Ghana) comprised personal name, descriptive phrase, title and catch phrases which reflect vivacious and warm culture in the academic environment. The study also reveals that socio-cultural factors such as gender, mood, domain, purpose of discourse, presence or absence of a third person (usually a lecturer), and relationship of interactants influence the use of varied address forms for an addressee.

Zipporah (2014) investigated how the social variables such as age, education, and social context influence the use of honorifics among Gikuyu speakers of Kenya. The data for the study was purposefully collected from twenty-four (24) Kasarani constituency native of Nairobi. The data was obtained from participant observation, interview, and tape recording of spontaneous speech, and were categorised into three; borrowed honorifics, the use of honorifics, and the functions of borrowed honorifics in different contexts. Zipporah further classifies borrowed honorifics into seven: the kin terms used as social honorifics, the religious, academic, military, political honorifics, affectionate and social titles. The functions of borrowed honorifics in Gikuyu include; persuasion, attention getting device, sarcastically, use of honorific with intention of showing love, closeness, intimacy to the addressee and to convey respect to dignify the addressee.

In another study, Salihu (2014) assessed the choice, the shifts and the gender differential linguistics style of the use of names in an Hausa community. The study revealed that the employment of a proper address term is affected by factors such as age, gender, personality, social status, religious orientation, and family relationship, degree of respect, familiarity, formality, and intimacy between the interlocutors. The frequency of the application of honorifics and titles in Hausa language revealed the importance of superiority and courtesy among the people. According to Salihu (ibid), Hausa address terms are gender sensitive, relatively formal, culturally, socially, and politically loaded.

Ogunwale and Bamigbade (2014) investigated the factors that are responsible for name dropping and change among the Yoruba elites. The factors according to the findings include, lack of cultural understanding, incorporation of western culture on the part of the young elites, and religious bigotry. The study demonstrates how the factors affect the way Yoruba names are conceived, used, changed and dropped in preference to English, religious and social names. The authors argued that name dropping, and change are common sociolinguistic phenomena among the Yoruba elites and the situation should be stemmed or at least be sanitized, as it strongly portends strong linguistic alienation and culture subversion which are deemed to be devastating to sustainable developments. Ogunwale and Bamigbade (2014) work relates to the present study as they both deal with avoiding a name and using another in its place.

Anchimbe (2011) discusses name-avoidance by Cameroonians, and some of the socio-pragmatic impacts it creates. Focus is on five items that are often used in place of personal names—manyi (mother of twins), tanyi (father of twins), moyo (in-law, especially male), mbanya (co-wife in a polygamous marriage), and mbombo (namesake). The paper identifies some of the contexts in, and the purposes for, which these terms are used. Cameroon, like many other postcolonial contexts, is acutely different from certain English-based Western cultures in which using someone's personal name may be part of a positive politeness strategy and not disrespect or impoliteness as it is the case in the Cameroonian and some other African cultures. To call certain people by their personal names is disrespectful and a sign that they have no honour among the people. The terms (name-avoidance) studied here are also often used strategically on the people who are not, for instance, mothers/fathers of twins or who may just well be strangers or first-time acquaintances.

On address terms in Mbeere (Kenya), Katakami (1997) explores explains how the members in the adjacent generation-sets supposedly have great respect for one another, especially the in-laws. He examines three modes of address for daughter-in-laws. The first is “the same and Alternate Generation-Sets”, where the people of the exactly the same generation are close and friendly, as well as calling one another by one's personal name. They sometimes call each other by a word or phrase which is chosen as an expression of friendliness. The second is “the adjacent Generation”, where the relationship requires great respect. According to Katakami (ibid), the members of the older set can call those of the younger set by their names, but the members of the younger set is expected to use the kinship terms such as father and mother. The last mode of address for daughter-in-laws is the “clan exogamy and address to women”. Here, a woman who married into a homestead is called not by her

personal name but by the title of the ‘daughter of her own father’ by her parents’ in-law. The principle also applies to any person who is at least in the same generation-set as her father-in-law in lineage.

Similar to Katakami (1997) work is a traditional language of respect, which is used by women in Nguni and Sotho cultures, known as *hlonipha*. This traditional language of respect is known among Nguni as *ukuhlonipha* (literally “to respect”) and known among the Sesotho as *Hlompha*, while in isiZulu, it is *isiHlonipho*. These words (*ukuhlonipha*, *Hlompha*, and *isiHlonipho*) describe a relationship between the couple (mostly on the part of wives) and their in-laws. According to Thetela (2002: 177), *hlonipha* is realized through politeness encodings, such as euphemism, avoidance and profanities. Women who are married in these cultures (Nguni and Sotho) are not allowed to pronounce or use words which have for their principle syllable any part or syllable of the names occurring among her husband’s relatives (Finlayson, 2002: 282). In other words, the wife is expected to avoid certain words (based on her marital position) and replaced by another. Finlayson (2002) argues that *hlonipha* linguistic custom of syllable avoidance is applied to the names of the father-in-law, mother-in-law’s brothers and their wives and the mother-in-law’s sisters and their husbands. His study focuses on a language variety associated with respect in Nguni language. Finlayson in his study, interviewed nineteen (19) women to ascertain the extent to which women in urban areas uphold the tradition of respect for their in-laws through *hlonipha*. Twelve (12) respondents claimed that they had retained this custom and knew how to *hlonipha*. However, from Finlayson’s interaction with these respondents, he discovered that some words of *hlonipha* origin were used by them (the respondents), but the consciousness of syllables occurring in the family names of their husbands was not followed as expected in their culture. According to Finlayson, only a core vocabulary which consists of words that were generally known and accepted as *hlonipha* words were used. His study revealed that the decreased use of *isiHlonipho* in urban settings is indicative, among other things, of the broader trend towards a less “traditional” and a more “Westernised” lifestyle among urban residents. It also suggests that South African female youth question traditional patriarchal customs and legacies which position women in a submissive role.

Fakuade, Kemdirim, Nnaji, and Nwosu (2014) investigate linguistic taboos in the Igbo society in terms of their classification and socio-cultural factors affecting their usage. Two principal methods were used to collect data for the study: questionnaire and oral interview. The data collected were presented in tabular form, using descriptive statistics. The study classifies linguistic taboos in Igbo society into five categories: morality-related linguistic taboos, veneration-related linguistic taboos, decorum-related linguistic taboos, religion-related linguistic taboos and fear-related linguistic taboos. The study argues that while religion and decorum-related linguistic taboos are unmentioned and have no permissible alternatives because they are closely tied to different Igbo deities, morality, veneration and fear-related ones have euphemisms. Veneration-related linguistic taboos category is much related to the present study as it touches on some of the terms which the present study sets to explore. However, the study by Fakuade et al (2014) focuses on the taboo terms, their classifications, their euphemisms, the glosses and the English translations, as well as when and who use them; while the present study focus is on personal names one needs to avoid and their alternative terms, which also serve as politeness form of address.

Oyeka (2015), similar to Chunming (2013) studied euphemisms as substitutes for verbal taboos in Igbo language dynamics. The study examined and described the various categories of such words. Data comprised one hundred and fifty (150) of the taboo words/expressions which were elicited through oral interviews from two hundred (200) Igbo native speakers representing various individuals without recourse to age, sex, educational background, occupation and location. The respondents were randomly selected based on convenience random sampling. The theoretical framework adopted for the analysis was the politeness and face approach as proposed in Brown and Levinson (1987). The study indicated that euphemisms were employed to avoid mentioning certain issues directly. According to Oyeka (Ibid), practitioners of certain professions (the police, mobile tailor, prostitution, diviner, thieves, etc) feel ashamed as regards their reputation in identifying with their means of livelihood, and resorts to euphemism for occupational prestige.

From literature, studies of African names and naming practices have been more on personal names, focusing on the meanings and etymology of these names and details about the circumstances surrounding how such names came to be. The studies that get close to the present study however focused on taboo items. The research has not examined much on names and politeness, and its importance to the society. This is the gap the present study sets out to fill, focusing on euphemistic terms in place of personal names.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for the analysis of this study is politeness and face approach as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Politeness according to Brown and Levinson is the practical application of good manners or etiquette. It means showing regards for others in manners, speech and behaviour. Following Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, politeness is to cater to the positive "face-wants" of interlocutors and to show them that one intends to cooperate (and assume their cooperation) in "maintaining face in interaction" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:61).

Brown and Levinson introduce the notion of 'face' in order to illustrate 'politeness'. According to them, all interactants have an interest in maintaining two types of 'face' during interaction: 'positive and negative face'. Brown and Levinson define 'positive face' as the positive and consistent image people have of themselves, and their desire for approval, while 'negative face' is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction". Utilising this notion of 'face', 'politeness' is regarded as having a dual nature: 'positive and 'negative politeness'. While 'positive politeness' is expressed by satisfying 'positive face' in two ways: indicating similarities amongst interactants; or expressing an appreciation of the interlocutor's self-image, 'negative politeness' saves the interlocutor's 'face' (by mitigating face threatening acts), or satisfying 'negative face' (by indicating respect for the addressee's right not to be imposed on). Brown and Levinson argue further that every member of a society has 'face', which is defines as one's public self-image. When a speaker decides to commit an act which potentially causes a hearer to lose face, the speaker tends to use a politeness strategy in order to minimize the risk.

Although Brown and Levinson's politeness theory allows for some cultural variability, they contend that the use of politeness strategies in the management of face is universal. Four strategies (bald on record, off-record hints, positive politeness, negative politeness) can be used by speakers whose utterance involves a face-threatening act. In Igbo culture generally, one needs to strive to know when to use person's first name and when the use brought about negative face that can mar good interpersonal relationship. Igbo culture demands the younger ones to use polite address form (alternative name) to the use of first name in addressing their elders especially in face to face interaction. In other words, personal names are used in restricted contexts by the people.

4. Methodology

The data for the study were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data collection involved the researcher's oral interview, focus group discussion and self observation approach in which she closely observed how people address others and how they themselves were addressed. The respondents interviewed were both adults and children of Igbo origin, regardless of where they live (urban or rural areas). The respondents were randomly selected and interviewed based on convenience random sampling. In-depth interviews were employed with the aim of exploring in detail the address terms among the young and old, and the main purpose of name dropping/avoidance and the use of alternative names. The researcher asked the respondents to mention the terms which they use to address their close relations. Also, focus group discussions were used in this study to unveil the politeness terms used among the Igbo for different people at varied contexts.

This provided for further cross-checking of the address terms gotten from interview and observation. The researcher guided group discussions for children and youths in the selected communities. In each community, two groups were organised (one group for children and another for youths) and the number of the participants varies from five to seven people in a group for the discussion. The group members were encouraged to talk freely about the polite way(s) they use in addressing their elders. Metadata on each respondent such as age, sex, education, social status, occupation, location and marital status were noted, given that these social variables could influence the use of alternative names or name avoidance. The ages of the respondents interviewed range from eleven to seven-eight (11 to 78) years. One hundred and seventy-one (171: 78 males and 93 females) respondents constitutes the population of the study. The number of adults were eighty-three while eighty-eight respondents were below 18 years old. However, fifty-three respondents were married, one hundred and sixty-two (162) were Christians while nine respondents were traditional religion practitioners. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents lives in the selected four communities², while the rest live in different part of the country. The majority of the respondents (89%) were either students or teachers, farmers or traders. The researcher who is native speaker of Igbo through her intuitive knowledge was able to identify some avoided names and their alternative terms. The secondary source of data collection involves published materials such as textbooks and journals.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

² The four communities studied were Awgbu, Agulu, Nanka and Umuawulu, all in Anambra state, Nigeria.

The data collected for this study were categorised into three: Igbo kin terms, *aha otutu* (a kind of praise name), and the borrowed honorific terms. The analysis follows this categorization.

The kin's terms used to show politeness

1. **Mama/nne** (mother): Tradition requires that one calls the mother, “nne”, or “mama”. Children are not allowed to call their parents by name, it is totally forbidden. In other words, tradition placed restriction on them on the use of their mother’s personal name to address her, whether in face-to-face interaction or in her absence. The use of Mama/nne as polite address form also extends to another woman who is old enough to be one’s mother. Also, once a woman begins to have children, people often avoid addressing her with her personal names, especially the in-laws. Rather, they call her by her child’s name preceded with mama/nne. Example, if the first child is Udoka or Afam, she can be addressed as, mama/nne Udoka, mama Afam (Udoka’s mother, or Afam’s mother).
2. **Papa/nna/ nnaa** (father): Father’s personal name is also avoided. According to one of our respondents, the polite way of addressing ones’ father is nna, papa, or nnaa. He states however that older children can as well address their father with his praise name. In similar way, a woman may in place of appreciating the husband, call him his praise name. These names are all mark of respect. A personal name of a man who has children are often avoided and the alternative is either the person’s aha otutu (a kind of praise name) or the name of the man’s child preceded with papa/nna/nnaa. Example, papa/nna Okechukwu and papa/nna Azubuike (Okechukwu’s father and Azubuike’s father).
3. **Mama/Papa Nnukwu**: The terms are used to address one’s grandparents, either in their presence or in their absence. The study also revealed that the term is also extended to first wife in a polygamous family. One of our respondents stated that they call their father’s first wife, “mama nnukwu” (big mother), and his own mother (the second wife), “mama obere” (small mother).
4. **Ochie**: This is a short form for either *nne m ochie* (my grandmother), or *nna m ochie* (my grandfather): Culturally, it is disrespectful to address one’s parents with their personal names, the same also applied to the grandparents. These terms are often used in the absence of the grandparents, or when one is introducing the grandparents to someone. The use of **Ochie** is also extends to any of the mother’s kinsmen (both male and female) in place of their personal name. It is a polite way of addressing someone and at the same time avoiding the person’s personal name.
5. **Ogọ** (in-law): The term is used to address any of the in-laws (mother in-law, father in-law, daughter in-law, son in-law, brother in-law, sister in-law). So, instead of using the personal name of the person, **Ogọ** (or sometimes the person’s praise name) is used. The personal

names of the in-laws are often not used (especially in face-to-face interaction with the bearer) except for the younger children.

6. **Ọga/Onye-isi/Nna m ukwu** (master): The terms are used to address one's master. That is, anyone in a superior position. **Ọga** and **Nna m ukwu** are also used by some women to address their husband, while some use **Ọkpataku** to address some of the husband's male relatives. According to one of our respondents, people use these terms in place of people's personal names as a mark of respect. In addition, a person learning work (apprentice) shows respect to his master by addressing him with the term (**Ọga/Onye-isi/Nna m ukwu**), while the apprentice's friends and relatives address the man with **Ọga** preceded with the name of the apprentice. Example, Ọga Ndụbuisi (Ndụbuisi's master).
7. **Nne m Ukwu**: The term is often used in the absence of the addressee. It literal means my big mother. It is used by housemaid to address his female boss in her absence. **Nne gi Ukwu** (your big mother) is also used by other women in addressing another woman's mother-in-law.
8. **Oriaku/Odoziaku/Nwunye** (wife): It is impolite to call a married woman by her personal name, especially the woman's in-laws. Even people who are older than the woman use any alternative or euphemistic term in place of the woman's personal names. **Oriaku/Odoziaku** are used by relatives of the husband, especially in face-to-face interaction. Also, the in-laws can also address the wife with, "**nwunye m**" (my wife). However, **nwunye** preceded with the personal name (or aha otutu) of the woman's husband is often used by the woman's in-law especially in her absence or when introducing her to somebody. For example, nwunye Ifeanyi (Ifeanyi's wife) or nwunye Akụabata (Akụabata's wife).
9. **Nwunye-di**: This is a term used to address a co-wife in a polygamous family. The term also extends to wives in one kindred.
10. **Maazi** (Mr): This is a term used generally to refer to adult male. **Maazi** is often preceded by the person's personal name. For example, Maazi Uchenna (Mr Uchenna). It can be used in face-to-face interaction with the person or in his absence.
11. **Nwaada** (Miss/Mrs): This term is used to address adult female either married or unmarried by their mates, younger or even their elder. It can be used on face-to-face interaction or during the absence of the addressee. It is the direct opposite of **Maazi**.
12. **Di/Ọkpataku** (husband): The two terms are used to address a married man. In Igbo culture, once a man gets married, he is often not addressed with his personal names by some people (especially the wife, wife's relatives and friends). His personal name is often replaced with his wife's name preceded with "di", e.g. di Eberé (Eberé's husband). The term is not restricted to a person that marries the woman alone; the woman (the wife) extends the terms

to the husband's siblings and kinsmen. In other words, a wife can refer to all the husband's male relatives as **di m** (my husband) or **Ọkpatakụ** (wealth accumulator).

13. **Ada** (First daughter): The term is not restricted only to first daughter according to one of our respondents but extends to any female child regardless of her position in the family. **Ada** is also used to address all female born from the same kindred (Ụmụada³), whether married or unmarried. The Ụmụada use the term, "Ada" to refer to one another, especially in face-to-face interaction (instead of the person's personal name) regardless of the person's ages, social and marital status, as a mark of respect to one another. In addition, the personal name or praise name preceded with Ada is used when introducing the child to the person who knows the father. Example, Ada Ejiofo, or Ada Omemgbeoji (Ejiofo's daughter, or Omemgbeoji's daughter).
14. **Nwa nnaa**: This is a polite term used to address any man who comes from the same kindred with the addresser instead of the person's personal name. The addresser can either be male or female.
15. Names preceded with **Ọkpara/ Diọkpara** (first son of a person): Instead of calling the person's name as in the case of **Ada**, one can simple say, "Ọkpara/Diọkpara Ogbuagu" (Ogbuagu's first son), which is often in the absence of the person, not when addressing the person face-to-face.
16. **Nwadiala**: This is the term used by a person (the addresser) to address another person (addressee) whose mother related to the speaker by blood. In other words, **nwadiala**'s mother is a relative to the addresser. **Nwadiala** can extend to anybody from that clan or community, especially when a woman marries outside the community. **Nwadiala** is opposite of **Ochie** which was explained earlier.
17. **Amụkọrọ**: The term is used to address a person whose mother and the mother of the addresser comes from the same kindred, clan, village, or town. In other words, their relationship is based on common maternal home.
18. **Ichie**: This is the term used as a marker of respect by a person to another who is an elder and has taken a title. **Ichie** is often used in place of the person's personal name. According to one of our respondents, it is polite for anyone to address him (the respondent) as **Ichie**, or **Omenyiri** (his *aha otutu*), but not his personal name. The study also revealed that some people are currently addressed as **Ichie** but not by merit, either because they just acquire wealth or the role they perform in the community, or their age.

³ Ụmụada is an association of all the females born in the same kindred, who often gather to discuss about their welfare, also the welfare of their brothers and their families. Umuada settles even the most difficult cases, and no sane person disobeys them.

19. Personal names preceded with **Nwa** (child): Personal names are often preceded with **nwa**, especially when one is describing someone. For example, Nwa Udoka, nwa Uchenna (Udoka's child, Uchenna's child). One of our respondents stated that in their community (Awgbu – Abo-anị clan) that **nwa** preceded with personal name was also used to address a child, but in this case, the personal name is not only for the parent of the child but also for the child that baby-sits the child in question. For example, when they say. “nwa Ebere”, it means that Ebere in this context baby-sits the child.
20. The couple that have twins are often addressed as Papa/nna Ejima, Mama/nne Ejima.
21. **Eze/Igwe** (King): Each community has a king that leads them and represents them outside the community. The king is never addressed by his personal name. Rather, the people address him, **Eze** or **Igwe**, or his title name. For example, “Igwe Ahụbaraezeama”.
22. **Onye-nkuzi** (Teacher): Primary and secondary school learners use the term to address their teachers both in face-to-face interaction and at the absence of the teacher.
23. **Ezenwanwaanyi** (Queen): This term is often used to address a woman who is a native doctor/traditional healer.
24. **Dibia**: The term is used to address a man who is a native doctor/ traditional healer. It is opposite of *Ezenwanwaanyi*.
25. **Ụkọchukwu**: This is the term used to address a minister in charge of a Christian church or congregation (see pastor/priest/father).
26. **Onye-amụma**: This is the term used to address a diviner. It is also used to address some minister in charge of some new generational churches, especially in rural area where there is a dominant of Igbo language.

Aha Otutu

Aha otutu is a common culture among the Igbo. It is a kind of name taken by Igbo people, and specifically the adults. People are required at certain stage in their life to take up a name that reflects their achievements, personality, character, attitude, ideology, and aspirations. However, some people are “given” the name which they endorse or change to the one they prefer. *Aha otutu* leads to avoidance of personal name. It is an alternative name, which is a polite way of addressing the elderly ones. *Aha otutu* is a choice name by the bearer, and when used, it is a better form of address from younger person to adult, among age mates, from older person to young adults who has taken names. It also extends from wives to their husbands in some special social context. This is because addressing another by his personal name may amount to disrespect, especially younger person to older ones. In other words, once a person takes *aha otutu*, many people stop calling him his personal name but *aha otutu*. It saves the face of the caller and bearer of the name. That is why one often hear, *Gini ka a na-*

etu gi? (Meaning, “what is your *aha otutu*”?). This usually comes from someone who does not know the other person’s *aha otutu*. The bearers often feel honoured and happy when people address them with *aha otutu*. It is a name that reflects who the person has grown to be.

The *aha otutu* as gathered for the study were divided into male and female. The male *aha otutu* include the following;

- i. Akụdo (Wealth of peace)
- ii. Akunne (Mother’s wealth)
- iii. Oḡobūchionye (In-law is one’s destiny)
- iv. Nwachinaemere (A child that is guided by his personal god)
- v. Ohamadike (The people knows great person)
- vi. Ugobūeze (The eagle is the king)
- vii. Ezihakaego (A good name is supreme to money)
- viii. Nwajiugonnaya (The pride of the father)
- ix. Umunnakwe (If the kinsmen consents)
- x. Akaekpuchiōwa (Hand does not cover the moon)

Some of the female *Aha Otutu* as gathered for the study includes:

- i. Uemma (Good pear)
- ii. Unọenu (Upstair)
- iii. Uḡbọakwa (The box of cloth)
- iv. Ojūugo (The eagle kolanut)
- v. Ochiōra (A leader)

From the study, any of the names above serve as a mark of person’s identity as well as a polite way of addressing either an age mate, elder or a friend. One of our respondents stated that he often call his father his *Aha otutu*, “*Agbanwodiikeizu,agbaghariaya*” (When a great one is excluded in consultations, such consultations must be remade). According to him, he cannot address his father with his first name, “*Izundu*” (counsel for life) which is not only an impolite address form but also a great disrespect to the father’s personality.

For the women, is like abomination for a woman to address her husband with his first name, even in his absence. The study revealed that women can address her husband with his *Aha otutu*, or with phrases such as, *Di m, Nke m, Obi m, Onye nwe m, Nna m Ukwu* or *Oga m*. Not only these, they can also address their husband with the name of their child (especially the first child) preceded with *papa*. For example, if the couple’s first child’s name is *Uchenna*, the woman can address him as *Papa Uchenna*.

Furthermore, there are other alternative names in use when personal names are avoided as shown from the following.

- i. *Aha otutu* preceded with *nwunye/Oriaku* (wife): For example, *Nwunye Ogbuagu* (Ogbuagu's wife), *Oriaku Abubaugo* (Abubaugo's wife)
- ii. *Aha otutu* preceded with *di* (husband): Example, *Di Arude* (Arude's husband), *di Achalaugo* (Achalaugo's husband).
- iii. *Aha otutu* preceded with *Nwanne* (sibling): For example, *Nwanne Akwabata* (Akwabata's brother).

Borrowed Terms Used as Polite Form of Address

Incorporation of borrowed items on the part of the Igbo, especially the young ones are on the high. The following terms were identified as borrowed terms from our respondents;

1. **Mum/mummy**: The term is used by child/children to address their mother, and sometimes used in addressing other people's mother. Also, church members often use the term to address their female pastor, as well as the pastor's wife.
2. **Dad/daddy**: Child/children to their father, and anyone who is old enough to be their father. Also, church members to their male pastor.
3. **Granma** (grandmother): Child/children to their grandmother.
4. **Granpa** (grandfather): Child/children to their grandfather.
5. **Father**: The term is mostly used to address priest of Roman Catholic Church. That is, the church members to the Roman Catholic priest
6. **Mother**: The term is used to address Roman Catholic elderly nun. However, some continue addressing them as, "sister".
7. **Sister**: Younger siblings to their older sister, it also includes female church member, and can extend to any female older person. It is also used to address the Roman Catholic nuns in general.
8. **Madam**: A polite way of addressing woman in general, also house-help to his female boss in her absence.
9. **Landlord/landlady**: The term is used to address the owner of a house where a person is a tenant.
10. **Brother**: Younger siblings to their older brother, it also includes male church member, and can extend to any male older person. It is also used to address the Roman Catholic monks. One of

our respondents also stated that she calls her husband ‘brother’ but couldn’t give any reason why she addresses the husband with the term.

11. **Auntie:** Younger siblings generally to their older female, it also includes female teacher/non-teaching female staff in most private schools.
12. **Uncle:** Younger siblings generally to their older male, it also includes male teacher/non-teaching male staff in most private schools.
13. **Chief:** This is a term used to address a title holder, a respected older male person.
14. **Chairman:** This is a term used to address a local government chairman,
15. **Headmaster:** Primary school learners to the male head of primary school. Also anybody can address the male head of primary school, even the retired ones.
16. **Headmiss (Headmistress):** Primary school learners to the female head of primary school. Also, anybody can address the female head of primary school, even the retired ones.
17. **Teacher:** Primary and secondary school learners to their teachers, especially learners in government own established schools.
18. **Professor:** The term is often used by people to address a person teaching in university regardless of the person’s position/rank.
19. **Doctor:** It is used to address a medical practitioner, as well as traditional healers.
20. **Lawyer/Barrister:** The term is used by people to address a person that studied law at university whether practising or not. It is used in the presence of the person. In his absence, the term will be preceded with the person’s personal name. For example, Barrister Uzochukwu.
21. **Engineer:** The term is used by a people to address a person that does electrical works for them, in place of his personal names, especially in face-to-face interaction with the person. However, Engineer with the personal name of the person is often used in his absence to specify the particular engineer the person is referring to. For instance, Engineer Dozie.
22. **Customer:** The term is often used by traders to address the people that often buy things from them even the person that comes to their shop for the first time.
23. **Driver:** Driver is often used in the absence of the person, while Oga Driver is used in the presence of the person as a polite address term.

24. **Oga-Conductor:** The term is used to address a person who collects fare in a public transport. Many of the people according to our respondents are not
25. **Pastor/Reverend/Evangelist/Man of God:** These terms are used to address the man of God in place of their personal names. However, the terms can be preceded with their personal names. Example, Pastor Jacob, Reverend Isaiah, Evangelist Thomas, etc. Meanwhile, Man of God is not used with the person's personal name.

This study reveals that the borrowed honorific terms as mentioned above are more in use nowadays. According to one of our respondents, "one person can be addressed in different ways by different people in different contexts. In other words, there is multiple address term for one person. For example, a friend is called *Pastor* by his church members and *Lecturer/Daddy/Sir* by his students in the university, *Teacher* by people that knew him when he was teaching in secondary school, and among his town's people, he is addressed as *Nnanyereugo*", while in the family, he is called *Papa, Papa Nkechi, Di Ifeoma, Ogo* by the in-laws etc.

6. Findings and Conclusions

The study explores the personal names of the adult respondents and their alternative names they are called by different people. Children were asked what they called their elderly ones through interviews. The meaning attached to alternative names can be teased out by understanding the context in which conversations occur, and that the alternative names are rendered intelligible by revealing their internal rationality, which is embedded in the culture of the Igbo in general and the selected communities in particular. The study reveals that an average Igbo man has many terms used in addressing him by different people in varied contexts. These terms are socially inclined and mostly preferred by the addresser as one gets older to save the face. For example, a man is addressed as "*di m, nna m ukwu, Oga*" (by his wife), *papa, nnaa*, dad/daddy (by his children), *Ogo* (by his in-laws), *papa/nna/daddy Uche* (by his neighbours or younger ones), *Ononenyi* (by his mates and older persons). These various terms are used even by a non-relative as a mark of respect. In other words, an individual has multiple address terms as alternative to personal names which serve as a politeness marker.

The use of personal names is socially restricted among the Igbo. The younger people do not address the elderly ones by their personal names, but the elderly people can address the younger ones by their names. Also, people of the same age can address one another by their personal names. However, in the case of men, they usually use their praise names among one another. Igbo culture requires that men are free to address women directly by name, while women are not expected to do the same. Women are traditionally expected to show respect to men when addressing them. The study supports Zipporah (2014), "that in social interactions, respect and deference must be shown to those who are older than oneself.

In this study, attention is paid to the use of certain terms as substitutions for real or personal names, references are also made to the strategic use of these terms for pragmatic gains. The study reveals that it is not always a biological mother that one calls "mama/mum/mummy". The terms

(mama/mum/mummy) also extend to any woman who is old enough to be one's mother; this also applied to other kinship terms. So, these kinship terms are often used as a kind of respect from the addresser to the addressee. Also the terms can as well be used to flatter the addressee, even into giving the addresser whatever he wants. The major pragmatic motivations for the use of alternative terms (and avoidance of personal names) are politeness and respect.

Cultures attribute different levels of importance to the patterns used in addressing people. These patterns differ from the use of people's personal names to the use of other terms in place of personal names. The pragmatic roles of the use of alternative terms include; (im)politeness, closeness, (dis)respect, and deference, which depend on the name one used (or avoided). The use of personal names or the alternative terms for (im)politeness (respect) are culture bound. The social variables identified from this studies (which affect the use of the terms) among the Igbo with regards to politeness are age and gender.

Igbo tradition place restriction on the use of personal names when addressing a person of a higher status (e.g. familial, professional or age), especially when the person is within ear-shot, or in face-to-face interactions. To save the face of both the addressee and addresser, the interlocutor use "honorifics" or "polite terms".

According to Yang (2010), there are three reasons to the use of address terms. They are to:

- i. attract people's attention, to remind the hearer one's professional status or the relationship between the speaker and the hearer.
- ii. show politeness and the difference in social class and the degree of respect in certain occasions.
- iii. reflect social information about identity, gender, age, status and the complex social relationships of interlocutors in a speech community.

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