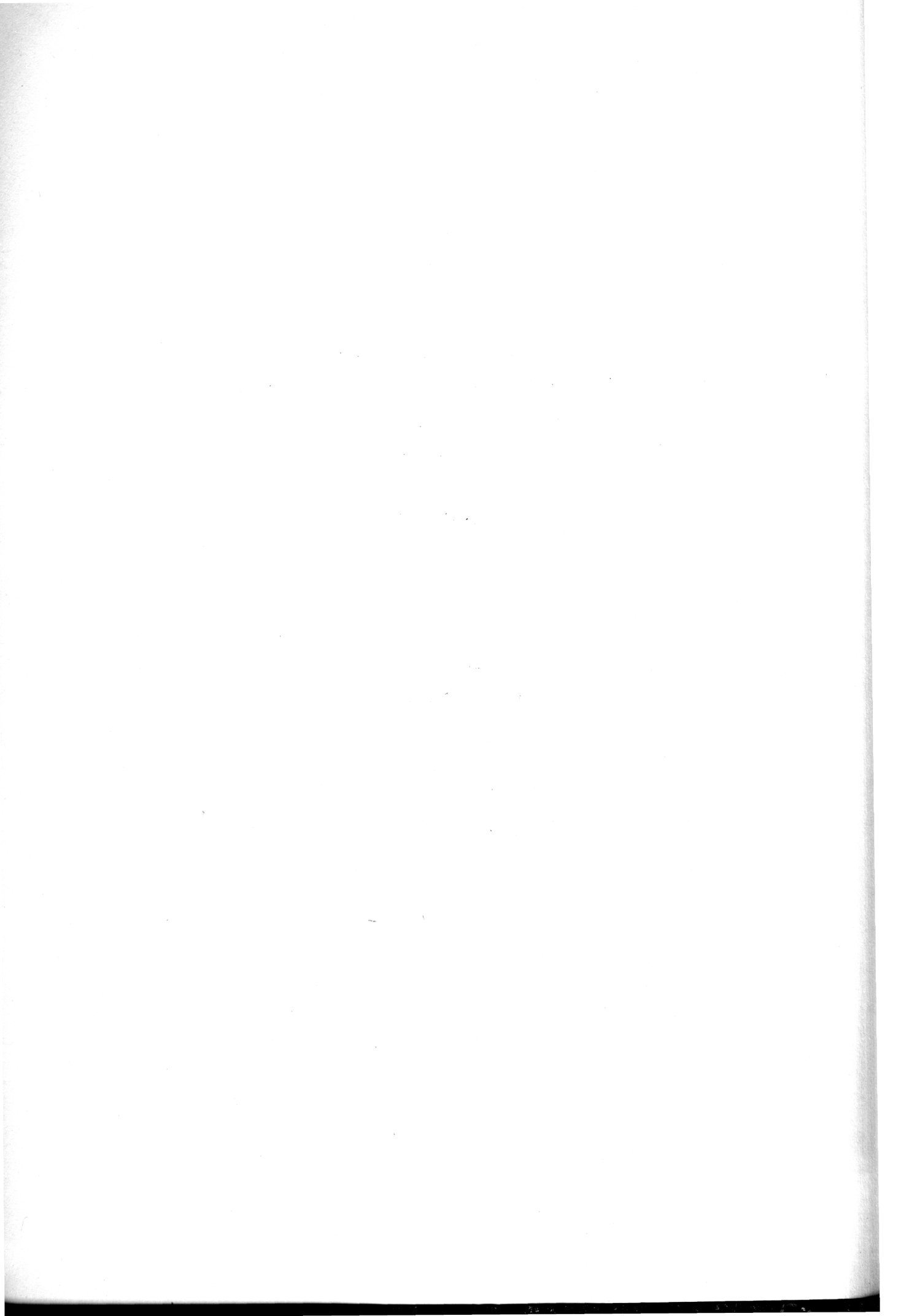


USAGE OF ADDRESS TERMS :
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE SOCIAL GROUPS

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Usage of Address Forms : A Comparative Study of Three Social Groups

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Address in the Thai language is a very complicated matter. In fact it is so complicated that very often speakers avoid addressing their listeners, not knowing with assurance which proper term to use. Address terms can be expressed linguistically by any of the following categories of terms:

1. Second-person pronouns
2. Kinship terms
3. Titles
4. First names and nicknames
5. Honorifics

Second-person pronouns There are various words for second-person pronouns namely :-- [khun] , [thân] , [thəə] [mɨn] [ʔon] [naai] and [nǔu] . The choice among these terms is determined by the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee which in turn depends on age and status. Since many discussions and studies have been done on personal pronouns the usage ^{/of} the second-person pronouns will not be discussed in detail here.

Of the seven second-person pronouns cited above only the first two can cooccur with kinship terms, names and titles. Both [khun] and [thân] convey the feeling of politeness and respect. However, their usage is distinguishable. [khun] is used among equals and in informal situations. It is most commonly used before names to show that the speaker is polite to and respect the addressee. [thân] is used with superiors and in most cases it is used in formal situations. The only informal situation where [thân] is used is when the addressee is a high ranking member of the royal family. [thân] is also a third-person pronoun for a respected person.

Kinship terms Kinship terms like "grandfather" [taa], [pùu], "grandmother" [yaa], [yaai], "uncle" [lun], "aunt" [pâa], [náa], "older sibling" [phii] and "younger' sibling" [nó'ny] are commonly used as address terms in informal situations to show intimacy and respect. It shows intimacy in that the speaker is talking to the addressee as if he/she were his kin though he/she may not be. It shows respect to the addressee if the term used indicates that the addressee is older. It means that the speaker acknowledges that the addressee is older and that he may be in the same generation as the speaker or he may be in the same generation as the speaker's parents or grandparents, depending on the term chosen. In the traditional Thai culture "being older" is automatically being "superior".

However, today, being older does not necessarily mean "better". Besides, with the prevailing western influences, people do not want to be thought as "old". Thus one feels better when addressed as [phii] rather than as [náa] or [pâa]. Likewise it is probably more courteous to address a person as [pâa] or [lun] than as [taa] or [yaai].

Titles Titles are used both in formal and informal situations. In formal situations, the use of titles indicates that the speaker acknowledges that the addressee is an important person in an organization or that he is recognized as important person socially. In informal situations, titles can be categorized as names. Titles commonly used in academic circles are as the following:-

[?aa - caan] "teacher, instructor and sometimes professor"

[kha - ná - bə - dii] "dean"

[?a - thi - kaan - bə - dii] "rector"

[hũa - náa] "Head"

[phũu - ?am - nuai - kaan] "director"

[pra - thaam] "chairman"
 [dók - tᵊə] "Dr." (Ph.D.)

Names Names fall into two categories - first names and nicknames.

In informal situations first names are normally shortened if they have more than one syllable. The shortened first names may be used invariably with first names if the addressee also has a nickname.

Cooccurrence of address terms Second - person pronouns, kinship terms, titles and names can all occur by themselves. However, some may be combined to indicate nuances of politeness and respect, to more fully specify the referent being addressed.

Examples

1) To show respect:

1) Second - person pronoun [thân] + Title

"Mr. Rector"	[thân]	+ [ʔa - thí - kaan, ɔ - dii]
"Mr. Chairman"	[thân]	+ [pra - thaam]
"Dean"	[thân]	+ [kha - ná - bɔɔ - dii]
"Mr. Director"	[thân]	+ [phûu - ʔan - nuai - kaan]

2) To show politeness

2) Second - person pronoun [khun] + name

"Mr. Somsak"	(first name) [khun]	+ [sóm - sàk]
"Miss Anong"	(first name) [khun]	+ [ʔa - non]
"Mrs. Kanda"	(first name) [khun]	+ [kaan - daa]
"Mrs. Tiv"	(nickname) [khun]	+ [tíu]
"Mr. Tong"	(nickname) [khun]	+ [thon]

It should be noted that [khun] does not occur before titles and [than] does not occur before names with one exception namely that the name belongs to a high ranking member of the royal family as mentioned earlier. This pattern of occurrence is also true with members of the kinship term group. That is, [khun] can occur before all members of the kinship term group but [thân] normally cannot except for the situation noted above. Another exception is also found in translation from Chinese into Thai where [thân] is used before kinship terms in addressing ordinary people.

Titles can occur only before names. Names cannot precede members of other classes.

[naai] which is commonly used to address intimates can also occur before men's names. When it cooccurs with men's names and used as an address term, it carries two different meanings. When used on official occasions in words like [naai - sôm - sâk], [naai - dii] and [naai - cháat - cháai], [naai] carries a meaning which is an equivalent to "Mr.". When used on unofficial occasions, [naai] in the same words conveys the meaning that the addressee is inferior to the speaker.

Official occasions	Unofficial occasions
[naai] + name = Mr. + name	[naai] + name = Inferior addressee

In a study done by Dan I. Slobin, Stephen H. Miller and Lyman W. Porter, on Forms of address and social relations in a business organization, in San Francisco, it was found that first name was used between equals and in addressing subordinates; unequal status was often reflected in a nonreciprocal address pattern in which the superior received "Title + last name" and the subordinate first name. Their findings were consistent

with earlier studies, whose results had appeared in the literature. On the basis of these studies, Slobin et al. had proposed a sociolinguistic universal that the address term exchanged between equals and intimates is the same one which is directed towards inferiors and that term exchanged between non-intimates is also used to address social superiors.

In this paper, the author attempts to find patterns in the use of address terms among three groups of people who work in the same organization, how they use second - person pronouns (SP), kinship terms (KT), titles (TT) and names (N) in addressing people around them in their work. It is exploratory in nature. The author also wants to find out if the proposed sociolinguistic universals viz. mentioned above are present in the Thai language.

Method

Informants

All 35 informants work in Liberal Arts, Thammasat University. They are divided into three groups. Group I consists of fifteen teachers - six men and nine women. Group II consists of ten are workers in the administrative office - four men and six women. Group III consists of 10 janitors - five men and five women. Their ages range from 26 to 56.

Procedure

The author started collecting address terms by listening to the conversations by these three groups of people in the Liberal Arts Building for about one month. Then direct interviews of 10 - 20 minutes each were conducted for about the same length of time. In the interview, the informant was directly asked how he addressed the Rector, the dean, the teachers, friends of equal ranks, inferiors, and strangers in formal and informal situations and how he was addressed by various people around him at Liberal Arts.

Results

1) Structurally, there is no difference in usage of address terms among the three groups of people in Liberal Arts. That is every group uses second - person pronouns, kinship terms, titles and first names or nicknames to address people around them. The differences between the groups seem to lie in the choice of address term in the second - person pronouns. [thân] is used among the teachers both by itself and in combination with titles while the third group does not use it at all. Only two members in the administrative group use [thân] in combination with titles. Both of them happen to be the higher level members of the administrative staff who have opportunities to attend meetings at the faculty and university levels.

The second - person pronouns which are used solely in the third groups are [ʔəŋ] and [kɛɛ]. These two pronouns are commonly used in dialects out of Bangkok and among the working class people in Bangkok. [mɛŋ] is also very commonly used among the janitors and two male informants in the second group said that they used the word regularly among their intimates. [mɛŋ] is considered a rude word in Standard Thai but it is a standard pronoun used in most other Thai dialects.

[khun] is used in all three groups to show politeness.

[nǎu] is also used in all three groups to addressees who are considered much younger than the speaker.

[thəə] is also reported used in all three groups to intimates and inferiors.

2) First names, Nicknames and kinship terms are used by all in all three groups among intimates.

3) Titles are used to address superiors and among equals.

4) All members of the first group are addressed by the title [?aa - caan] by the members of the second and the third groups.

5) All members of the second group are addressed [khun] + First Name by members of the other two groups.

6) Members of the third group are addressed either by First Name, Nickname or [naai] + First Name, Nickname or kinship term + first name by members of the second group.

7) Age is an important factor in using address terms among intimates of the same group since kinship terms are used. Between groups, age is overruled by status.

Discussion

Status

The usage of address terms in Liberal Arts clearly separates informants into three status groups. All informants are aware of this grouping. No reciprocal address terms occur between the three groups. All members of the teacher group is addressed by the title [?aa - caan] by all members of the other two groups. And all members of the administrative group are addressed [khun] + "first name" by members of the other two groups. The members of the second and the third groups never address the teachers by [khun] + "first name". Likewise, members of the third group are not addressed [khun] by any other members of other groups. They are either addressed by their first name, nicknames or [naai] + "first name" if they are male. This again points to the fact that the informants are aware of their status differences. As mentioned earlier status overrules age between groups. That is a much older janitor

will still be addressed by his first name by a young teachers.

Within the same group age is an important factor in choosing an address term. Intimacy between members of the same group is always shown by the use of kinship terms if there is an age difference of perhaps one year or more between the speaker and the addressee. It is noticeable that within the teacher group only two kinship terms are used -- [phii] "older sibling" and [noʔoʔ] "younger sibling" no matter what the age difference is. (Unless one is related to another by blood or marriage other kinship terms may be used.) This may mean that intimacy among the teachers occurs only between people in the same generation or the kinship terms used are just symbols and age does not really count. Of the three groups, the teachers are the most influenced by the western cultures. They no longer consider questions like, "How old are you?" or "How much do you earn?" as normal questions. So it is more likely that age is not really important in using kinship terms.

In contrast to the teacher group, kinship terms used in the third group are based on age. Words like [lun] "uncle" and [paa] "aunt" are often heard in addition to the normal [phii] "older sibling". This means that within the janitor group people are classified into at least two generations among intimates.

Age difference within the administrative group is not as great as those in the teacher and janitor groups and only [phii] "older sibling" is reported.

Second - person Pronouns

The members of the three groups might have the same number of second - person pronouns in their verbal repertoire but the percentage of the members of each group using each word is quite different.

In informal situations, 80% of the members of third group reported using the pronoun [mih] with intimates while nobody in the first group reported using it and only 20% of the second group reported using it. While 80% of the members of the first group reported using the pronoun [thân] and its combination with titles only 20% of the second group used it and none in the third group used it.

The second group has no clear cut indicator as the other two do. [thəə] is used among intimates in all groups by female speakers only. It is also used to address inferiors by 26.66% of the first group, the only group to use the term in such manner.

Kinship terms

Kinship terms are used among intimates within each group when there is an age difference between the speaker and the addressee. However, they are generally not used between members of the different groups. This finding is not completely in accord with what Slobin, Miller and Porter reported as a sociolinguistic universal, that is the address term exchanged between intimates is the same term used in addressing social inferiors. No members of the first group ever use kinship terms with the third group and the latter is definitely considered social inferior to the first. However, one female member of the second group reported addressing a member of the third group by the kinship term [lup] "uncle" and the reason was that he was obviously an old person. It would not be right for her to address an older person by just first name. (Many members of the first group address the members of the second group by first name but the "I" form used for themselves is a kinship term.)

Using kinship terms as address terms requires some judgement. It is safe to use them with members of the same group but to use them with people of other groups one would run the risk of rebuff. It might be stated here that the greater the status difference the greater should be the chance of not using kinship terms.

Titles

Of the three groups only the members of the first group have titles and they are all addressed by the members of the other two groups by the title [ʔaa - caan] . Only the dean of the faculty and the rector of the university hold different titles. (They are the only different people asked about in the interview). Their titles are [kha - náʔ - bəʔ - dii] "dean" and [ʔa - thiʔ - kaan - bəʔ - dii] "rector". Other titles like "Dr." and "Head" (of a department) are rarely used among the informants interviewed.

It is worthy of note that the teachers often address strangers as [ʔaa - caan] even though they may not be teachers. It could be because they themselves are addressed by the term [ʔaa - caan] all the time and out of habit they address other people who seem to be of equal status [ʔaa - caan] too. Besides, there is no risk of rebuff addressing other people in this way.

Conclusion

The author has found that the use of address forms reflect, or gives clear indication, of the different status of the three groups studied at Thammasat University. The repertoire of addressing terms of the members of the three groups might be the same but their usage is different. Some

words can be used as an indicator of a group, e.g., [ʔəŋ] and [kɛt] for the third group.

The findings are consistent with Slobin et al. in that first name is used between equals and in addressing subordinates; unequal status is reflected in a nonreciprocal address pattern in which the superior receives "Title" or "Title + first name" and the subordinate receives first name or [ɬum] + "first name".

One of the terms used among intimates, [thəə], is also used to address inferiors but other words like kinship terms are not.

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