

## Address Terms and Power Play in Police-Suspect Interactions in Ibadan, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The usage of address terms by police and suspects significantly impacts police-suspect discourse. Previous linguistic studies on police-suspect interaction focused on roles, contexts, concealments, contradictions and pragmatic strategies, paying sparse attention to the (mis) use of address terms by interactants during interrogation. This study examines the various uses of address terms in police-suspect interrogations, their discourse functions, and the implications of their usage in interrogative contexts. van Dijk's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis served as the theoretical framework for the data of this study. Fifteen interactions were purposively selected from the data gathered at the Oyo State Criminal Investigation Department, Iyaganku, Ibadan, Nigeria. The findings revealed Minor Form of Address/ Hierarchical Titles, Bare Titles (BT), Hierarchical Titles (HT), Titles + First Name (TFN), Generic First Name (GFN), Criminal Nickname (CN), Terms of Criminal Abuse (TCA) as the classified address terms used to establish relationship, signal and reinforce social status/power, reflect cultural values, construct and negotiate identity, and redirect discourse. The study revealed that address terms have social, pragmatic, cultural, linguistic and psychological implications on the interrogations. The study concludes that address term usage in police-suspect interrogations has socio-cultural significance and invariably impacts the flow of interrogations.

**Key words:** Police-suspect interaction; Address terms; Pragmatics; Politeness

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the (Nigerian) Police Force, there exist various types of communicative interaction, which include police to police interaction, police to accused interaction, police to suspect interaction and police to witness interaction (Akinrinlola and Ajayi, 2021, p.488, Akintola, 2023). The police-witness interaction occurs between a police officer and a witness who is giving evidence concerning a particular occurrence. The police-victim interaction occurs between a police officer and an individual who is a recipient of a criminal incident; for instance, someone whose property was stolen is considered the victim of the robbery/theft case. The police-suspect interaction, which is the focus of this study, is one of the institutional talk domains in forensic discourse. In this domain, language resources are manipulated to achieve meaning. The two major interactants/participants in police interrogation are the IPO(s) and the respondent (who could be a suspect or witness).

While explaining the key interactants in a police-suspect discourse, Farinde (2018, p. 310) stated that the interrogating police officer is one of the police officers, specifically the one responsible for taking charge of a case at hand, which necessitates his being referred to as the interrogating police officer. He considered the suspect to be the person who had committed an offence. However, a suspect may or may not be the person who has committed an offence, but due to certain circumstantial evidence, they may have been accused of being involved in some way or another in criminal activities. Legally, a suspect is not considered a criminal until proven guilty in a court of law, after relevant evidence has been established.

Rock (2010) provides a clear summary of the two main participants in police interviews and interrogations. One, the interviewers (the police officers), who will undertake a wide range of activities, which may include listening, devising questions, delivering questions, reacting to given answers, writing notes or points for clarification, writing a statement, keeping in mind prior utterances, imagining and framing the context of a crime, reading of texts produced by them and other person(s) whether before or (and) during the process of interview. Additionally, they will participate in a variety of identity-related activities, such as empathising with and promoting disclosure, as well as procedural tasks, including ensuring the interview adheres to legal standards for its duration. Two, the interviewees, who may listen and reply to questions, provide narratives, write or draw (for instance, by mapping a crime scene), and engage in a variety of short- and long-term memory activation techniques, occasionally with the interviewer's assistance. He continued by saying that texts that describe and explain police interviews, as well as the linguistic and paralinguistic elements that comprise them, also influence them.

The police-suspect interrogation context shows a tangible amount of power play via language use by the interactants. Interrogation is a vital tool through which the mysteries behind criminal acts are unravelled, eventually leading to confessions and the solving of cases (Akintola, 2023). To conduct an interview/interrogation properly, whether as a police officer or a lawyer during a criminal inquiry, Agaba (2011, p.55) outlines four steps. The phases are as follows: rapport-building, information-sharing, challenge, and conclusion. During the rapport-building phase, topics completely unrelated to the crime or the focus of the investigation may be discussed. The NPF officer may make an introduction, inquire about the suspect's background, and use humour. He asserts that the primary goal of this stage is to establish a rapport with the suspect or witness, thereby facilitating an open exchange of ideas and information. The interviewer digs deeper during the information exchange stage, asking more pointed questions and requesting clarifications on replies, all without necessarily pressing the suspect.

At the challenge stage, the interviewer's demeanour may shift from friendly and approachable to formal and chilly. This results from the positive interaction during the stages of establishing rapport and sharing information, during which the interviewer gains a deeper understanding of the witness or suspect's psychology and degree of consistency. The interviewer may ask the suspect to share any additional information regarding the case that they believe the interviewer might want to know, after all relevant questions have been answered.

Similarly, four stages in interrogation were identified by Walton (2003, p.1778), as cited by Farinde (2018, p.310), as the formative stage, preparatory stage,

argumentative stage, and the closing stage. The formative stage is where the needed pieces of information relevant to the case at hand are gathered together. The preparatory stage has the questioner already prepared as regards the questions to be asked. The argumentative stage involves the main interrogating period, where questions and answers are exchanged. The closing stage is the final stage of the interrogation session, during which the information is organised in a logical order and basic conclusions are drawn. All these stages are essential to achieve the goals of the interrogation process. It can be deduced from the discussion above that interrogation or interview must be conducted systematically to avoid a miscarriage of justice in the interaction.

In the course of the interrogation, various categories of terms of address are used to not only index the identity of either the interrogator(s) or the suspect, but also to serve as tools to unearth the nature and gravity of the crime, foster cooperation, build rapport, and influence the suspect's perception of the situation. The use of the address term in the course of interrogation is not only somewhat borne out of cultural nuances but also shows the power dynamics that characterise police-suspect interaction. Owing to the importance of address terms in police-suspect interrogation and interaction, and their socio-cultural significance, this study examines different categories of address terms and their possible functions in police-suspect interrogation, a neglected area of study in the scholarship of police-suspect discourses.

A pool of existing linguistic studies has examined power dynamics in police-suspect interactions (Haworth, 2006, 2009; Benneworth, 2009; Dastjerdi, Latifi, and Mohammadi, 2011; Farinde, Olajuyigbe, and Adegbite, 2015; Ajayi, 2015). Others (such as Sabri, Estaji and Elyasis, Games, 2011; Farinde, Olajuyigbe, and Adegbite, 2015; Farinde, 2018; Osisanwo and Adegbosin, 2020) considered discourse markers and discourse strategies in police-suspect interactions, while some examined the use of language in police-suspect interaction (Ajayi, 2016; Akinrinlola, 2017) with a kind of neglect on the pragmatics of address terms and their implications in PSI. There is no gainsaying that examining the dynamics of power, discourse markers, and discourse strategies in police-suspect interaction provides insight into the nature of the PSI discourse; however, it is not adequate to look at them without considering the socio-cultural nuances and the dynamics of the PSI through the use of address terms. Therefore, this study examines different categories of address terms and their implications or functions in police-suspect interaction.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 presents the connection between address terms and police-suspect interaction, section 3 deals with the composition of the Oyo State criminal investigative unit, section 4 centres on the theoretical framework, section 5 discusses the data and

method, section 6 focuses on data analysis and discussion, while section 7 borders on conclusion.

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## 2. ADDRESS TERMS AND POLICE-SUSPECT INTERACTION.

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When people interact in any speech event, they address one another using specific words, phrases, or terminologies. These are referred to as address terms. Crystal (2008) explains the address term as ‘the manner of referring to someone in direct linguistic interaction’. Address terms refer to words or phrases used to address someone in a conversation, revealing social relationships, identity, roles, positions, status, and relationships (Pawestri, 2018). Terms of address can be explained as “words or expressions that speakers use to appeal directly to their addressees” (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2003, p.1). Leech (1999) differentiates between a term of address and vocatives by saying that a term of address is a device used to refer to the addressee(s) of an utterance, while a vocative is a particular kind of address term, a nominal constituent. He classified vocatives into different types: endearments, kin terms, familiarisers, given names (familiarised), given names, title and surname, honorific terms, and others. Similarly, Klumm (2021) presented his own eleven typology of address terms, namely: 1. Bare titles (T), 2. Hierarchical titles (HT), 3. Title + Last Name (TLN), 4. Bare Last name (LN), 5. Title + First name (TFN), 6. Bare First name (FN), 7. Generic first names, 8a. Nicknames, 8b. Terms of abuse, 8c. Terms of Endearment, 9. Kinship terms for relatives, 10. Kinship terms for non-kin, and 11. Minor forms of address. To him, forms of address are among the most fundamental linguistic means by which speakers mark and negotiate interpersonal relationships. Clyne et al. (2009, p. 32) assert that “forms of address can be used to signal affiliations and dis-affiliations with others, both individuals and groups”, similar to Eggins’ (2000) view that forms of address constitute a salient linguistic device through which speakers construct and negotiate identities. Concerning the use of nominal and pronominal address, Klumm (2021) posits that a high degree of social distance between the speaker and the addressee is prototypically expressed by the V pronoun or by nominal forms of address such as titles on their own or titles in combination with the addressee’s last name. A low degree of social distance, by contrast, usually triggers the use of the T pronoun or analogous nominal forms such as first names or terms of endearment.

Address terms are used in all contexts of speech events, including the classroom, workplace, hospital, courtroom, and police-suspect interactions. While the kind of address terms used in a context may vary from those used in another context, it is established that such terms are used. Police-suspect interactants need to refer

to each other during interrogations, which necessitates the utilisation of address terms. The terms vary from nominals to pronominals, with the latter being pervasive than the former. The use of honorifics by interactants in this institutional context is also widespread due to the power dynamics evident in the context, and also reflects the institutional culture that defines such an institution. Most of the time, suspects use honorific pronouns to refer to IPOs, whereas the use of honorific pronouns by IPOs to refer to suspects is highly dependent on certain socio-cultural factors, such as age, class, or status. Social psychological concepts, such as power and solidarity, have been suggested as particularly significant factors in understanding address systems (Crystal, 2008). Ajayi and Oyetade (2016) have established that language use varies in police-suspect interactions, responsabilising low-profile suspects more than high-profile suspects. Language use in this context involves linguistic choices which include address terms.

Klumm (2021) assert that the use of terms of address can be interpreted as a strategy to either maintain or threaten the hearer’s face; explaining that the hearer’s face may be saved through appropriate use of address terms, and at the same time, the hearer’s face can be threatened through the speaker’s inappropriate use of terms of address. This is further established in Ajayi’s (2020) study, which shows that the employment of words like ‘Oga’, ‘daddy’, and ‘baba’ (meaning ‘old man’) can be face-saving or face-threatening strategies, depending on their use. This view is in tandem with the position that the use of terms of address can be interpreted as a strategy to either maintain or threaten the hearer’s face. He argues that some terminologies may be employed by either interactant based on the premise of operating within the context of Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs that respect elders. This deference may be associated with factors such as age, status, or position. He comments that high-profile suspects receive some level of deference during interrogations compared to low-profile suspects, and that linguistic treatments are often given to suspects based on their class or social status. It is, therefore, essential to note that the use of address terms in police-suspect interactions is influenced by cultural variables or factors that ultimately impact the possible outcome of the interaction. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential in dealing with diverse cases, making effective policing decisions, and managing various situations and individuals from different backgrounds.

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## 3. OYO STATE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT, IYAGANKU, IBADAN

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The State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (SCIID) is a Nigerian government domestic

criminal and intelligence unit of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) responsible for investigating crimes and intelligence reports. The unit is empowered to carry out investigations, make arrests, and prosecute criminals to the fullest extent of Nigerian law. On July 9 2019, the unit launched its first tech-based interrogation facility. The state CIID is headed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) of the state. The Oyo State CIID is located in Iyaganku, while the Oyo State headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force is situated in Eleiyele, Ibadan. The Oyo State CIID, Iyaganku (OYSCIID), was purposively selected for this study because it is the highest department dealing with criminal investigation in the state, and its location in the metropolitan city of Ibadan, where people of diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliations co-exist.

#### 4. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (1998, 2001, 2006, 2009) was employed as the theoretical framework for the study, owing to its features, which are capable of unpacking cognitive and sociological structures evident in the selected interrogation texts. The theory establishes social structure as the primary domain of ideology, which is referred to as the foundation of social representations of groups. This approach to CDA affirms that for apt production and comprehension of discourse, the cognitive aspect is germane. He avers that discourse is conditioned through a shared social knowledge, ideologies and personal mental models. Twenty-seven (27) ideological strategies were identified by van Dijk (2004). They include: (i) implication; (ii) lexicalisation; (iii) number game; (iv) vagueness; (v) presupposition; (vi) evidentiality; (vii) generalisation; (viii) authority

##### **Key Ideological Strategies:**

##### **Framing:**

Discourse can frame certain issues or events in a way that promotes a particular interpretation or perspective, often at the expense of others.

##### **Omission and Selection:**

The choice of what to include or exclude from a discourse can be used to promote a particular ideology or perspective.

##### **Stereotyping:**

Discourse can rely on stereotypes to create or reinforce negative images of certain groups, contributing to discrimination and prejudice.

##### **Naturalisation:**

Ideologies can be presented as natural or inevitable, making it seem as if they are simply the way things are, rather than the product of social and historical forces.

##### **Minimisation/Exaggeration:**

Certain events or issues can be downplayed or overemphasised to serve a particular ideological purpose

Van Dijk's approach to CDA was selected due to its features, which are capable of fulfilling the objectives of this study.

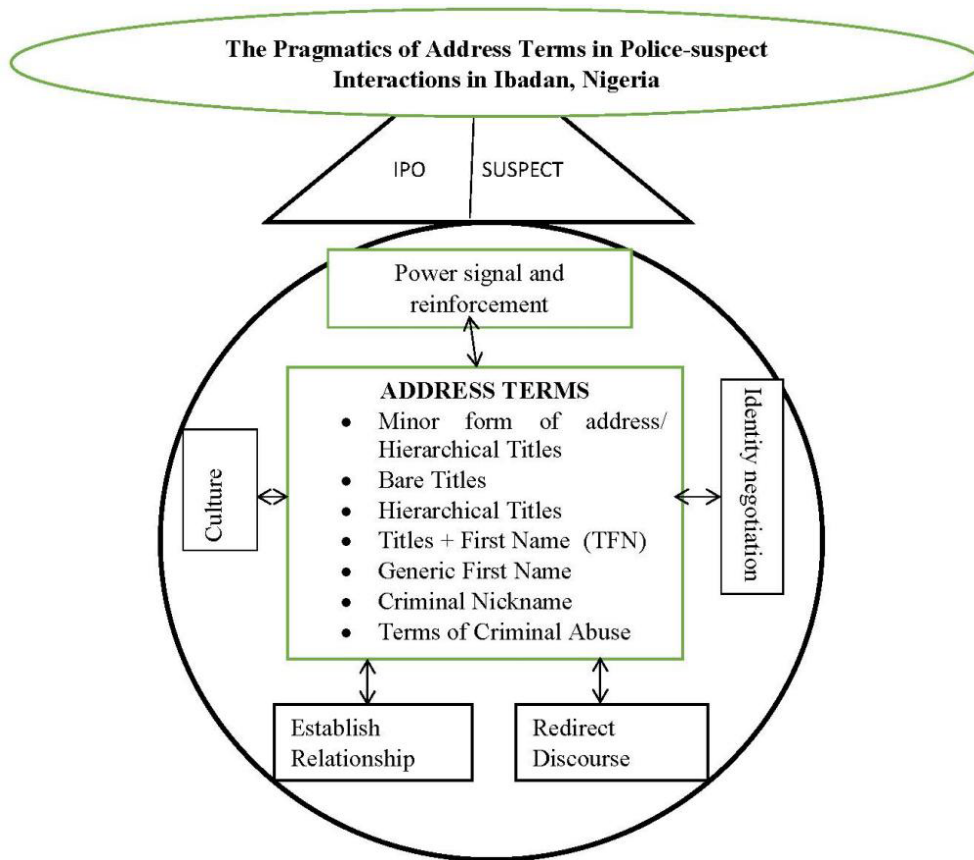
#### 5. DATA AND METHOD

The data were sourced from the Oyo State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (OYSCIID), Iyaganku, Ibadan. OYSCIID is the highest investigation and intelligence department in the state; this informs the choice of the source of data collection. Moreover, Ibadan is a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous city, where different ethnic tribes co-exist; this also contributes to the selection of OYSCIID, as various people will be involved in police-suspect interactions. The letter of introduction was obtained and taken to the state headquarters in Eleiyele, Ibadan, after which a necessary referral was made to the OYSCIID in Iyaganku for the data collection process. The Interrogating Police Officers (IPOs) and suspects are the subjects of the data, as conversations during the interrogation process were recorded and transcribed for analysis in this study. For ethical reasons, the names and other sensitive information of the suspects are not included in the transcription, but are coded using letters of the English alphabet. Fifteen interactions were recorded, and ten were purposively selected owing to their manifestations of address terms. All conversations between participants were recorded, regardless of the language used (English, Yoruba, or Pidgin English), and the recordings were manually transcribed. The paper employed a top-down analytical method to examine the pragmatics of address terms in police-suspect interrogations. This is done by categorising, defining, characterising and exemplifying address terms used in the interaction.

#### 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The major categorisations of address terms found in the data are: Minor form of address/ Hierarchical Titles, Bare Titles, Hierarchical Titles, Titles + First Name (TFN), Generic First Name, as categorised by Klumm (2021), nickname in his categorisation is adapted to Criminal Nickname in this study, while Terms of Abuse is adapted to Terms of Criminal Abuse in this study. They are used to establish relationships, signal and reinforce social status/power, convey respect, reflect cultural values, construct and negotiate identity, and redirect discourse, indexing social, pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological implications on the interrogations, as diagrammatically presented in the analytical framework below.





**Figure 1**  
**Analytical framework for the study.**  
 Source: Researchers (2025)

**Table 1**  
**Categorisations of Address Terms in PSI**

S/N	Address Term Category	Examples
1.	Minor form of address/ Hierarchical Titles	Oga police, Medical doctor
2.	Bare Titles	Sir
3.	Hierarchical Titles	Oga, Officer
4.	Titles + First Name (TFN)	Dr. ABC
5.	Generic First Name	Mr Man, Ogbeni, Mama
6.	Criminal Nickname	Ekun,
7.	Terms of Criminal Abuse	Shameless dog, Idiot, <i>Odaran</i> (criminal), <i>Ole</i> (thief), <i>Agbaaya</i> (old fool)

The framework for the analysis reveals the socio-cultural nuances and the dynamics at play in the interrogative context. It shows the categories of address terms found in PSI and the different functions they

perform, as well as the IPO and the suspects as the major interactants who utilise them. There is a bi-directional relationship (shown through the use of bi-directional arrows) between the address terms and the pragmatic functions which include power signal and reinforcement, culture index, identity construction and negotiation, and relationship establishment. These functions or implications vis-à-vis the address terms are discussed in the next section.

### 6.1 Establishment of relationship

Through the use of address terms, a relationship and rapport are built between the suspect and the interrogator. One of the devices of communication which serves as a key mediator in building relationships (Thomas et al., 2009), as is evident in this study, is the address term. Police-suspect interaction allows interactants to establish a relationship with each other; although the individual goals may differ on both sides, the IPO uses this to tease out information from the suspect, while the suspect uses it to gain the IPO's favour and disentangle himself from the crime being interrogated for.

### Excerpt 1:

- IPO: **Doctor ABC**
- SUS: yes sir, ẹ kú isẹ
- Yes sir, well done]
- IPO: **Doctor ABC**
- IPO: kín ló dé tẹẹ pa chief, ẹgbón yín?
- why did you kill chief, your elder brother?
- SUS: ẹmi kẹ?
- me?
- IPO: The CCTV footage showed you covering his face with a handkerchief to make him suffocate.
- SUS: ó mà ga ó, **officer**, ẹ mà misunderstand footage yẹn.
- This is serious, officer; don't misunderstand that footage
- I told you I had to put pressure on his chest to save his life when he was gasping.
- IPO: sọrọ now!
- can't you talk!
- Is that not you?
- SUS: ẹmi... (~) (0.4) ẹmi ni. **Officer**, ẹ dákun, ẹ sàánú mi. You just have to help me.
- I... I am the on. Officer, please, have mercy on me.
- IPO: so, iwọ lo pa Chief?
- so, you killed chief?
- SUS: yes... (~) (0.5) I (~0.3) ẹmi ni
- yes... I did
- IPO: ẹhn?! Ọmọ iyá ẹ (0.2) ọdájú ni ẹ ó. Ìwà ọdájú lo wù yẹn now
- Really? Your own sibling; you are callous. You acted so cruelly
- SUS: I'm so sorry sir
- IPO: why? Kí ni chief ẹe fún ẹ?
- why? What did chief do to offend you?

Excerpt 1 presented above is a murder case interrogation where a chief was murdered and his younger sibling, a medical doctor, was interrogated. Beyond being used to open a discussion (Friederike Braun, 2015), the address term “Doctor ABC” is interactionally (Yule 1996) used to establish and build a relationship with the suspect. The first part of the excerpt has the IPO employing the TFN (Title + First Name) to address the suspect. This foregrounds an existential knowledge of the suspect, fostering a relationship between the IPO and the suspect. The selection of TFN is intentional, presupposing that the IPO is somewhat familiar with the suspect. The second part has a reiteration of TFN, though now in quite a suspicious way, owing to the next turn of the IPO asking why the suspect killed the victim, who happened to be his elder brother. Even after being confronted with the evidentiality of the CCTV footage, the suspect employed the hierarchical title usage, ‘officer’, to reinforce the previously established relationship to disentangle him from the murder framing constructed by the IPO. While the relationship through the address term by the officer

is to gain as much information as possible and also to confirm the crime committed, the suspect used the address term to disaffiliate himself from the murder frame. The use of ‘officer’ in the third part, after being shown the CCTV footage, was intended to remind the IPO of how the suspect had been cooperative and the need for the IPO to assist him. Thus, the address terms used in the excerpt were not merely employed, but rather used to maintain a face-saving act (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Another instance is presented in excerpt 2.

### Excerpt 2

- IPO: eh! You be QQQ (a tribe in Nigeria)
- eh! are you QQQ?
- SUS: yes **oga**
- IPO: wetin be your name?
- what is your name?
- SUS: BBB
- IPO: where you see the iron we you carry?
- where did you pick the iron from?
- SUS: I see am for one side, no be say I steal am
- I saw it at a spot, not that I stole it.
- IPO: you no steal am? (0.2)
- you did not steal it, really?
- IPO: you no steal am? (0.2)
- you did not steal it, really?
- na you get am?
- Are you the owner?
- SUS: ha-ha, (0.1) no be me. But the place the iron dey, I think say nobody get it. I come carry.
- no, I'm not the owner. But where the iron was placed made me think it doesn't belong to anyone. That was why I carried it.
- IPO: ole!
- thief
- SUS: **oga**, I no be thief, (0.2) walahi (0.3) i go give them the thing back. I no be thief.
- Oga, I'm not a thief; God is my witness. I will return it to the owner, I'm not a thief.
- IPO: ẹ gbà mí kẹ! (0.3) you no be thief, o dè gbé irin tí kíi ẹ tẹ
- what do you mean? You claim not to be a thief, yet, you carried the iron that doesn't belong to you.
- SUS: **oga**, haba!
- IPO: ẹ iwọ lo gbé irin yẹn síbẹ ni? Na you put am there?
- did you put the iron at that spot? Did you put it there?
- SUS: no, **oga**
- what will you do now?]
- IPO: so wetin go happen now?
- SUS: kai, **oga**, (0.4) the problem na, (0.2) that thing no dey with me again. I don sell am for my friend.
- oh! Oga, the problem now is that the iron is no longer with me. I already sold it out to a friend.

Excerpt 2 is an interrogation of a suspect accused of stealing some heavy irons in a community. Just as Agaba (2011) posits, during the rapport-building phase, topics completely unrelated to the crime or the focus of the investigation may be discussed. The Nigeria police force (NPF) officer may make an introduction, inquire about the suspect's background, and use humour to build rapport. This is evident in the excerpt above as the IPO inquired into the suspect's background. As the IPO identified the tribe of the suspect, the suspect immediately answered in the affirmative, employing the hierarchical title 'Oga' to form an alliance and establish a positive face with him, which would make him escape any indictment. The suspect's constant use of 'Oga' was intended to familiarise himself with the IPO and gain its trust, thereby enabling his freedom. 'Oga, haba', as said on the sixth turn, is an intentional omission of claims that the IPO should not have been responsabilised for such a crime.

On the whole, address terms are used by either interactant in a police-suspect interaction to establish a relationship and save their face against incrimination. The two excerpts are in line with Clyne et al.'s (2009, p. 32) assertion that "forms of address can be used to signal affiliations and dis-affiliations with others, both individuals and groups. Forms of address are among the most fundamental linguistic means by which speakers mark and negotiate interpersonal relationships.

## 6.2 Signal and reinforcement of social status/power

Power play is highly evident in police-suspect interactions, as it is an institutionalised context that signals a status difference. Social psychological concepts, such as power and solidarity, have been suggested as particularly significant factors in understanding address systems (Crystal, 2008). The interactants in PSI utilise typified address terms to signal their social status and power, as exemplified in excerpts 3 and 4.

### Excerpt 3:

- IPO: what is your name?
- SUS: I'm **Dr ABC**
- IPO: **medical doctor?**
- SUS: yes **sir**
- IPO: who are you to chief?
- SUS: chief is my senior brother, we are three siblings: (0.2) chief, myself and our junior brother

Through interrogative construction, the IPO set the stage for the interrogation by asking the suspect his name. This is done with the interactional intention of identifying the man and gathering initial information

for the investigation. It is essential to note that knowing the suspect's name is pragmatically important in police-suspect interrogations, as it aids in the investigation and facilitates a background check on the suspect's personality. In the excerpt, the IPO's question regarding the suspect's name was answered as Dr ABC (TFN), using that to signal his social status in society and probable non-involvement in the crime. The suspect's use of TFN is a clear indication of his status in society and profession, which is used to evoke his professional power not only to control but also to evade suspicion and establish connections to any form of crime. Since Dr, an abbreviation for 'Doctor', can be used by different people- academics, medical doctors, honorary doctors-, the IPO enquired using a declarative question style, 'medical doctor?' To the question, the suspect answered in the affirmative, appending the bare title 'sir' to signal and reinforce power. The use of 'sir' foregrounds asymmetric power play in PSI, between the IPO and the suspect, notwithstanding the calibre of the suspect. Excerpt 4 portrays another address term used to this end.

### Excerpt 4:

- IPO: don't you know that if you do business well with him, he can bring more\ customers for you?
- And how much is #600,000 that you now want to spoil your image?
- Well, when are you returning his money?
- SUS: ha!
- IPO: what is it?
- Sus: **oga**, please you have to help me o
- IPO: help you? For what?
- Sus: See, I've spent the money. There is no where I can get the money

Excerpt 4 is an interrogation of a fraud case suspect who defrauded his client of \$ 600,000 and changed his location. The IPO's turn in this excerpt began with a conscientising act, revealing the implication of the suspect's act, and employing minimisation to de-emphasise the amount compared to integrity and a positive self-image. When the IPO asked when the suspect would refund the client's money, he exclaimed, employing the hierarchical title 'Oga' to reinforce the superiority of the IPO to him and, invariably, his capability in helping him out of the mess. The hierarchical title is an intentionally selected lexicon that reveals and foregrounds authority and power in the police-suspect interaction. Not only are the police officers called 'Oga' or 'Officer,' but they are also referred to as IPO, their main title according to their duty, as explicated in excerpt 5.

### Excerpt 5:

- Sus: I'm sorry oga; I'm just thinking of how he recognised someone with mask.
- IPO: [smiles] he recognise you with your voice.
- Sus: hmmm, the mask person didn't talk throughout the operation. Sorry, **IPO**, they said
- that the mask (sic) person didn't talk throughout the operation.
- IPO: **Ogbeni**, but you are in Akure on that day, how are you giving me affirmative answer
- that the mask person didn't talk throughout the operation.
- Sus: I have corrected myself that I heard people saying that.
- IPO: who are those people?
- Sus: general discussion in the office
- IPO: don't worry, you will tell me the truth; it's a matter of time because you are aware of everything
- Sus: I don't know anything and you can't implicate me

The suspect in excerpt 5 was interrogated on a burglary/theft crime, and responding to the IPO's comment on how the company's security guard recognised him as one of the burglars, he used *Oga* to show the asymmetric power between the both of them; when he was thereafter told that he was recognised through his voice, he retorted that the masked member of the gang did not talk all through the operation. When he noticed a mis-selection of sentence structure, he added, 'sorry, IPO...' using evidentiality to back up his earlier claim. IPO, used by the suspect, was deployed strategically further to uphold the erected power play between the interrogation participants. The IPO then used the generic first name "Ogbeni" (Mr Man) to refer to the suspect, as he could not align his statements with the person who was not at the scene of the crime. This is also an instance of a power play between the two interactants. This agrees with Klumm's (2021) position that a high degree of social distance between the speaker and the addressee is prototypically expressed by the V pronoun or by nominal forms of address such as titles on their own or titles in combination with the addressee's last name. A low degree of social distance, by contrast, usually triggers the use of the T pronoun or analogous nominal forms such as first names or terms of endearment.

### 6.3 Construction and negotiation of identity

The construction and negotiation of identity are paramount in PSI, especially for the suspect, who may use address terms to refute a particular identity imposed on them by the IPO. Excerpts to exemplify this are provided in excerpt.

### Excerpt 6:

- IPO: kare! **Ekun**. @@@
- well done, leopard
- Sus: it's the devil, **oga**
- IPO: how could you rape a young girl of sixteen like that? Don't you have a younger sister of her age? If someone do that to your sister, will you be happy?
- Sus: (face down)
- IPO: you are a disgrace for doing that to a young girl; and I assure you, you will be seriously punished for that. **Shameless dog!** (he stood up and walked out)

Excerpt 6 above is from a rape case; the suspect was a primary school male teacher who raped a sixteen-year-old girl who hawked oranges in his neighbourhood. After confessing to the crime, the IPO's selection of a criminal nickname 'Ekun' stereotypes his daring attitude. Walton (2003) asserts that at the challenge stage of the interrogation process, the interviewer's demeanour may shift from friendly and approachable to formal and chilly. The lexical selection of the criminal nickname was intentional, as 'Ekun' in English translates to 'tiger', an animal known for its fearless and strong hunting abilities. The metaphoric reference of a criminal name "Ekun" does not only negatively position the suspect as a criminal, but also subtly positions the man as a hunter who makes the girl a prey. This foregrounds the construction of the identity of a fearless criminal. However, the suspect opted for a negotiation by responsabilising the devil, noting the IPO's identity as a boss who could temper justice with mercy, by using the hierarchical title 'oga' for the IPO. The suspect's turn led to a conscientising act as the IPO posed a rhetorical question to the suspect to further establish the earlier constructed identity of a criminal. He went further to frame him as being a disgrace, assuring him of being punished, and then tagging him with a criminal term of abuse, 'shameless dog'. With these address terms, it is obvious that the construction of a criminal identity was etched on the suspect, which did not allow for negotiations.

### Excerpt 7:

- IPO: so, iwọ lo rape ọmọ ọlómọ, àbí ?
- so you raped that innocent child, right?
- SUS: [silence]
- IPO: @@@ **Ẹyin ti zah zuh rẹ̀e o**, wàá pé lẹ̀wòn!
- the 'zah zuh' disciples, you will rot in jail.
- SUS: kẹ̀e ẹ̀e báyeṅ o, ọ̀gá
- it's not like that, oga.
- IPO: báwo wá ní? (0.2) Mi ò bá ẹ̀ lẹ̀jọ̀ jọ̀.
- so how is it? I have no business talking with you.



In this excerpt, based on the shared situational knowledge of the case on the ground, the IPO posed a polar question that the suspect was unable to answer. The IPO thereafter employed implication, associating the suspect with crimes based on his attire; the suspect had artificial dreadlocks, and his trousers sagged, much like 'zah zuh'. 'Zah zuh' is a name for a popular Nigerian hip-hop musician (AKA Portable) known for his controversial lifestyle; this was lexicalised to frame the suspect as a criminal. The suspect understood this stereotypical statement and retorted to negotiate the identity; he argued that the case was not as presented to the officer. However, the officer did not agree to the negotiation but concluded that his matter was not debatable. *Zah zuh* is a term used to address the suspect to instantiate his criminality. The fact that IPOs use address terms to construct identities for suspects aligns with Rock's (2010) position that one of the IPO's responsibilities includes taking part in a variety of identity-related activities. It is also in tandem with Eggin's (2000) view that forms of address constitute a salient linguistic device by means of which speakers construct and negotiate identities.

#### 6.4 Reflection of cultural values

The Yoruba socio-cultural nuances also abound in PSI in Ibadan, Nigeria. One such example is respect, which is rarely conveyed by the IPO, except in instances involving high-profile suspects and other factors, based on the IPO's discretion and the gravity of the crime being investigated. Most of the time, suspects use honorific pronouns to refer to IPOs, whereas the use of honorific pronouns by IPOs to refer to suspects is highly dependent on certain socio-cultural factors, such as age, class, or status. In terms of nominal address terms, the suspect often shows respect to the IPO as he wields the power of the interrogation process. At times, IPOs use Yoruba words to identify suspects, such as Alaye, Ogbeni, Baba, Iya, and Ekun. These reflected the linguistic aspect of the Yoruba culture, as each address term used in context was tactical and consequential to the interrogation session.

#### Excerpt 8:

- IPO: you are a disgrace for doing that to a young girl, and I assure you, you will be
- seriously punished for that. **Shameless dog!** (he stood up and walked out)

This response embodies some Yoruba cultural orientations, most especially when the Criminal Term of Abuse (CTA) was used, 'shameless dog'. A person who is metaphorically termed a dog in the Yoruba philosophical orientation is considered sexually immoral and not an *omoluabi*. Thus, based on the IPO's questions and the suspect's answers, it was established that the suspect raped the young girl; thus, the CTA was employed, not only to construct a criminal identity, but also to reflect the

Yoruba cultural orientation and negative disposition to such an act. It should be noted that drawing from Yoruba cultural values, the CTA is used not only to condemn the act but also to unearth the cultural disapproval of it, which subtly positions the suspect as a cultural deviant.

#### 6.5 Redirect discourse

Another observable pragmatic role of address terms in PSI is that it is used to redirect the flow of discourse. There were times when the IPO deployed the use of address terms as a call to order, especially when the suspect had not been responding with the necessary information or had been hiding the truth. Thus, the address terms were utilised to redirect the suspect's responses, as is evident in excerpt 9.

#### Excerpt 9:

- IPO: báwo ló ɛ jé sí Chief?
- what is your relationship with chief?
- SUS: kúùkù Chief ni mí
- I am chief's chef.
- IPO: àtìgbà wo lo ti n ń ɕiɕé nílè Chief?
- how long have you been working in chief's house?
- SUS: Mummy XYZ tó jé àbúrò Chief ni wón sọ fún mí wípé ɛ mo lè ɕiɕé kúùkù nílè
- Chief nígbà yẹn, tí mo sì gbà láti ɛ é.
- Mummy XYZ, chief's younger sister was the person who informed me of the vacancy for
- the post of a chef in chief's house then and I agreed to do the work.
- IPO: **Iya yii**, ìgbà wo gangan ni?
- this woman, when exactly was that?
- SUS: hmm (~) (0.5) yóò ti tó odún mēfà àti bíi oṣù mélóó kan báyii. Àti ìgbà nàà sì
- níí, kò sí wàhálà kankan o.
- hmmm... it will be about six years and some months now. And since then, there has
- not been any problem.
- IPO: ìgbà wo wá ni wàhálà bèrè?
- so when did problem start then?
- SUS: ha! (0.2) àfí ti ikú wón yíi nàà ní (0.6) ah! Chief!
- ha! Just his death, oh! Chief!

This excerpt is from an interrogation of a murder crime where the domestic staff members of the victim were interrogated to identify the killer. The IPO asked what position the suspect held which she replied that she was the chef. The next wh-question in line 4 was expected to be a straightforward numerical answer, but the suspect was vague, explaining how she got the vacancy information through 'Mummy XYZ'. The omission of the expected response led the IPO to address her with a Generic First name (GFN) 'iya yii', meaning 'this woman', to redirect her to the question that had been earlier posed to her. The

suspect aptly understood the implication of the address term, as her next turn included the number of years, as requested by the IPO. Although the GFN had an undertone of anger, it was intentionally employed by the IPO to call the suspect to order, thereby providing the necessary information to unravel all the mysteries behind the crime. Another excerpt is provided below.

**Excerpt 10:**

- IPO: did you buy orange from ABC?
- SUS: yes, I bought #100 orange
- 3, IPO: How much did you give her?
- SUS: I was downstairs; I did not hold any money.
- So I told her to follow me upstairs to collect her money
- IPO: **Ogbeni**, did she wait for you outside or she followed you inside?
- SUS: I told her to come in because I have things to do inside,
- so I won't be able to come out to give her the money again

The rape suspect in the above excerpt was obviously hiding some relevant pieces of information, especially when he reported, through narration, that he told the young girl to follow him upstairs to collect his money. The omission of whether the girl followed him into his room or waited outside upstairs was intentional so as not to incriminate him. He employed a minimisation strategy to reduce the information to the girl following him upstairs, omitting the aspect of entering his room. This led the IPO to use the GFN '*Ogbeni*' to draw his attention to the omission of that information, and the need for him to answer that, by asking whether the girl waited outside or followed him into the room. The deployment of this address term was strategic in identifying the suspect's intention to digress and avoid certain information germane to the interrogation, and redirecting him to supply the information. This is one of the powers vested in the IPO to direct the flow of discourse for a successful interrogation outcome.

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## 7. IMPLICATIONS OF ADDRESS TERMS AND POWER PLAY IN POLICE-SUSPECT INTERACTIONS

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Address terms usage in police-suspect interactional settings has social implications in relation to power play in PSI. The use of a categorisation of address terms, such as hierarchical titles, projects recognition of the social stratification to which the addressee belongs. As discussed in the excerpts cited above, suspects utilise hierarchical titles to reinforce the already established power structure in PSI, thereby creating a social gap between the two interactants. This culminates in a psychological alignment

in which the suspect finds themselves exalting the IPO above any suspect whatsoever. This psychological alignment also has implications, as some suspects' mindsets have already adjudged them culpable based on the power established in PSI. The Yoruba culture, in which the study population is situated and data were gathered, has a significant impact on PSI, upholding sensitive cultural nuances such as respect, the omoluabi ideology, and the use of proverbs and witty expressions. A key aspect of Yoruba culture is the respect for elderly persons. However, this is not always obtainable in PSI, especially if the suspect is a low-profile individual; they may still be addressed. Also, when the suspect is finally discovered to be culpable for an offence, the honorific pronouns 'e'' yin' become withdrawn from the suspect, and the suspect's face may be threatened therewith. This has a massive implication that power play in PSI, as far as socio-cultural affordances are concerned, may be conditioned based on the culpability of the suspect. Linguistic choices and the pragmatic functioning of these choices are also of great concern when interrogating address terms and power play in PSI. The findings revealed that linguistic items signalling address are purposefully and purposively selected, being used to index power erection in the context. Some of these linguistic choices may even defy socio-cultural norms, but the institutionalised context of PSI allows them to be used in this way to establish a power play between the interactants further. To sum up, the findings revealed that address terms have psychological, socio-cultural, linguistic and pragmatic implications on the interrogations, thus aligning with some previous studies on address terms and PSI (Eggins, 2000; Clyne et. al., 2009; Ajayi and Oyetade, 2016; Ajayi, 2020; Klumm, 2021) which considers address terms as constituting a salient linguistic device by means of which speakers construct and negotiate identities, portray power and solidarity, show affiliations and disaffiliations, as well as save and or threaten faces..

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## 8. CONCLUSION

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The study set out to examine the importance of address terms in police-suspect interactions, with a view to unpacking the linguistic choices signalling address terms, the categorisations of address terms in the interrogations, the pragmatic functions of the use of address terms, and the implications of the use of address terms on power play in police-suspect interactions in Ibadan, Nigeria. Drawing from the interrogation sessions gathered at the OYSCIID, Iyaganku, Ibadan, the study discovered seven categorisations namely Minor form of address/ Hierarchical Titles, Bare Titles, Hierarchical Titles, Titles + First Name (TFN), Generic First Name, Criminal Nickname, Terms of Criminal Abuse following Klumm (2021) 's categorisation of address terms, though adapting

two: 'Nickname' to 'Criminal Nickname', and 'Terms of Abuse' to 'Terms of Criminal Abuse' The analysis and discussion of the data revealed that the address terms are used to establish relationship, signal and reinforce social status/power, convey respect, reflect cultural values and negotiate identity with the other interactant, which is in tandem with existing scholarly studies on address terms. The findings also revealed that address terms have social, pragmatic, cultural, linguistic and psychological implications on the interrogations as power play is overtly portrayed in the use of address terms in police-suspect interactions in Ibadan, Nigeria.

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