

# KINSHIP TERMS USED BY STRANGERS TOWARDS TWO OFFSPRINGS OF INTER-ETHNIC MARRIED COUPLES IN SURABAYA

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the kinship terms produced by strangers towards two young offsprings of inter-ethnic married couples who were used as enticements to generate the production along with the social factors. The data taken from both natural conversations and informal conversational interviews were analyzed using the theories of address Indonesian in Indonesian (John & Stokes, 1977), Javanese (Kuntjara, 2001), Dutch (Matres & Sekel, 2007), and those produced by Chinese-Indonesian (Kuntjara, 2009) and social factors proposed by Holmes (1992) and Wardhaugh (2006). The findings resulted in the mixture of kinship terms from Indonesian, Javanese, Chinese, Dutch, and zero address term which were addressed by strangers to M and F. In addition, addressors mostly considered their own aspects, ethnicity, setting, transactional status and function, and prior knowledge and personal preference as the decisive factors when choosing kinship terms. While the addressee's aspects, physical features and visible appearance, were the minor factors they took into account.

**Keywords:** Kinship terms, inter-ethnic, social factor

Before going to the message of the conversation, one has to address his interlocutors first. After addressing them, then the messages are delivered through conversations. The words used to address interlocutors are called address terms. Oyetade (1995, p. 515) defines address terms as "words or expressions used in interactive, dyadic and face-to-face situations to designate the person being talked to". Dunkling (2012) mentions that all terms of address are likely to be referred as 'names', such as first names (e.g. Christian names, given names, fore-names), last names (e.g. surnames or family names), and polite term of address for instance *sir* and *madam*. As the result of being multicultural, there is an extensive use of address terms in Indonesia which involves several languages such as *pak* [father] and *bu* [mother] from Indonesian, *mas* [older brother] from Javanese, and *oom* [uncle] (Iragiliati, 2006, p.31). Rather than classified as address terms, these terms are actually kinship terms, which are category words by means of which an individual is taught to recognize the significant groupings in the social structure into which he is born (Leach, 1958, p. 143). These terms are usually used towards family members. However, even strange outsiders are often assigned to one group or another (Bell, 1993: 18-21) by using kinship terms, which causes the emergence of what Blum (1997) refers to as 'fictive' kinship or human-made relationships when non-family members are addressed using terms which are supposed to be addressed only to people with 'blood' relations.

John & Stokes (1977) states several kinship terms from Indonesian. These terms are used towards both one's nuclear and extended families. The terms are:

- *ibu/bu* [mother]
- *bapak/pak* [father]
- *kakak* [older sibling], *adik* [younger sibling] : used freely towards male and female

Besides, kinship terms in Indonesian, there are also Javanese kinship terms (Kuntjara, 2001) people use to address family members, which are:

- *mak/mbok* [mother]
- *mas* [older brother]
- *mbak* [older sister]
- *jeng* [younger sister]

For a man who looks older than or about the same age as the addressor, the safe Indonesian terms commonly used would be *bapak/pak* [father], and *ibu/bu* [mother]. If the person is a bit

younger, addressor can use *mas* [young man], *mbak* [young woman], *dik* [much younger man] or *jeng* [much younger woman].

However, Wardhaugh (2006, p.270) once mentioned that sometimes when we are in doubt to address others, we can avoid using any address term at all. Same thing happened to Persians in the sense that they may use attention getters or greetings when they are not sure what address term is the most appropriate (Aliakbari, 2008).

There are also some kinship terms borrowed from Dutch such as *mama* [mother] (<Dutch mamma) and *papa* [father] (<Dutch pappa), *tante* [aunt] (<Dutch tante) and *om/oom* [uncle] (<Dutch oom). Other familiar terms are *oma* [grandmother] (<Dutch oma) and *opa* [grandfather] (<Dutch opa). All these kinship terms indicate the strict male-female distinction in Indonesian (Matras & Sakel, 2007, p. 312).

Moving from mono-ethnic to inter-ethnic group, there is a Chinese-Indonesian society who has their way of addressing others especially strangers or non-family members. Even though a typical native Chinese has a tendency to be family-oriented, Chinese living abroad the mainland, for example Chinese Indonesia, is likely to be more flexible in using appropriate address terms (Kuntjara, 2009).

A Chinese-Indonesian might use these address terms:

To parents: *mama/ mami* [mother], *papa/papi/daddy* [father]

To grandparents: *emak, bobo, oma, grandma* [grandmother], *engkong, akung, opa, grandpa* [grandfather]

To siblings: *cecé* [older sister], *koko* [older brother], *didi* [younger brother], *mémé* [younger sister], *sis* [sister], or just names.

To one generation older relatives: *ayi/a'ik, tante* [aunt], *shushu, oom* [uncle]

To strange outsiders: *mas* [older brother], *cé, a'ik, mbak* [older sister], *ko, susu'* [uncle], *tante, oom, bu, pak, mam,* and *sir* are also used.

There should be a reason why an addressor chooses a particular kinship term. Social factors proposed by Holmes (1992), especially participants, setting, and function, are used to analyze addressors' answer upon the question of why they choose such kinship term. Moreover, Wardhaugh's (2006) talking about more specific factors influencing an addressor's choice of kinship terms, such as transactional status, degree of intimacy, and social status, are used to enrich the analysis.

Inter-ethnic marriages result in giving birth to offsprings carrying two, or more, different ethnicities in their blood. Their physical appearances might not be as distinct as those born from mono-ethnic parents. A female Chinese-Javanese might have big eyes with eyelids but yellow skin. If the addresser knows this person quite well, including the parents' ethnicities, then Chinese terms might be used to address her. started with that phenomenon, this study is in search for the answers of two research questions. First, what are the kinship terms used by strangers towards two offsprings of inter-ethnic married in Surabaya? Then the second question is what are the possible social factors influencing the chosen kinship terms used to address those offsprings.

## METHODS

This research used qualitative approach that produces descriptive data either in writing or orally and both from people and the behavior observed from the subject (Furchan, 1992:21-25). The data were taken from natural live conversations between offsprings of inter-ethnic married couples in Surabaya and strangers. This study did not just observe the 'what' (address terms produced) but was more focused on "why" (factors influencing the address terms) and "how" (how all the terms and factors were related) since these gave more flexibility, allowing one to take advantage of the richness of data and thus to obtain more meaningful results (Wright, 1995).

Two participants functioned as enticements/baits were used to generate the strangers' production of kinship terms. In other words, the writer 'utilized' them to trigger outsiders to choose the most appropriate kinship terms. The criteria for them were a young male and young female, whose parents have different ethnicities, such as a Javanese father and Chinese mother, and should be 20 to 25 years old. Two participants were chosen as the most appropriate ones. First was a 21-years-old male from the Architecture department who was Chinese-Dutch-Javanese, 167 cm tall, with a snub/pug nose (*pesek*) and dark skin. The female was a 21-years-old Javanese-Chinese girl from the English Department. For the rest of the research discussion, the male bait would be called **M** and the female would be called **F**.

The data were collected through two steps, observation and informal conversational interview. Going with each of them (M & F) to different places for almost 4 months, every kinship term an addressor produced was written in the notes, along with the details of the settings and the stranger's relationship to M & F, for example buyer – seller or student – staff. The next step was informal conversational interview which was used to investigate the possible influencing social factors on strangers' choice of kinship terms through asking the question of “*Mengapa Anda memilih kata panggilan tersebut?*” [Why you choose that particular kinship term?] to every addressor M & F met. The diction and codes of the sentence being asked during the data collection was slightly changed following the setting of the conversation, but still focusing on the main idea. As Patton (2002) stated, this type of interview relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction. This inquiry allowed addressors to response freely on the question given. Moreover, addressors' personal data, such as age and ethnicity, came as additional information. All of these answers were used as extra data to answer the research questions, especially the one regarding social factors.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

After collecting the kinship terms as well as interviewing addressors for about four months, the research resulted in a mixture of multi-language kinship terms used by various addressors. The explanation of the kinship terms along with the social factors is organized in form of pairs (kinship terms which are parallel/in equal level such as *pak* and *bu*, *om* and *tante*, and so on) and consisted of combined analysis between kinship terms used towards both M and F and the social factors.

### **Javanese – *mas* and *mbak***

This might be the most preferred kinship term used by Javanese people since all addressors are Javanese and this term originally comes from their language, Javanese. The farmer and his wife, who were the host family of M during his community outreach program, live in a sub-village in Kediri where the majority people are Javanese. This couple formed a fictive kinship, as explained by Blum (1991), towards M by treating him like his own son rather than an outsider and towards F to create a homey and welcoming atmosphere for her. The man working at a copy center around Siwalankerto mentioned that most of the customers and other employees are Javanese. As seen from the kinds of people they met every day, it is their habit to call others who look younger with these Javanese terms. Moreover, two fruit sellers M & F met at a traditional market opened every morning in a small alley in Siwalankerto Selatan chose this term as they said “*Monggo Mas'e dicoba.. Buahnya seger.. Dijamin mantep*” [Have a try, Sir. The fruits are fresh and delicious taste guaranteed] as they wanted to lessen the distance so M would feel homey which could raise the opportunity of M buying fruits from those sellers. The fruit sellers also point out the complicated act of speculating buyers' background. It might take some time, yet they do not want to lose the customer. *Mbak* is friendly enough to be used as address term towards young-looking females despite the fact that those buyers are probably younger than them. This term is also used towards the older one. Two newspaper sellers they met at Galaxy Mall used the same terms. Simply speaking, the thing playing role in the choice of this term is the background of the addressors, especially the workplace and ethnicity.

### **Chinese – *ko* and *cé***

Almost all addressors who used these terms were Chinese. A high school student used that as he was studying in Petra 2 Senior High School whose students are dominated by Chinese people. M, especially, has slanted eyes, which this school boy thought was the noticeable characteristic of Chinese people. The phone and computer shop owners, who were 8 and 2 years older, felt more comfortable using Chinese terms because the place they work is Pasar Atom, a modern market where almost all sellers and customers are Chinese people. Moreover, Chinese terms can be used towards Chinese and non Chinese, while Javanese terms might make Chinese customers feel uncomfortable or even irritated. With them having fresh face and dressing neatly, it was enough to assume that both participants were not non Chinese. Javanese is still okay being addressed with Chinese term rather than a Chinese being addressed using a Javanese term.

A drink seller in Galaxy Mall refers to the reality that that mall is located in Chinese-dominated housing areas as well as meeting Chinese people more often every day make he becomes habituated to call young male customers with that term. Similar answer was obtained when a female Javanese employer working in a DVD store explained the reason of her choice. Gadgets such as Blackberry and iPad also things she noticed to indicate that the person bringing was a Chinese. Three university students studying in Petra Christian University stated the influence of their campus as the main consideration of choosing an appropriate address term.

#### **Indonesian – *kak***

Two kindergarten students were taught by their teacher to call everyone young coming to the school with *kak*. The unique thing was their teacher, who was 5 years older than M, addressed him using the same term. This Indonesian term is also universal, in the sense that it could be used to call both male and female interlocutors and it does not imply any specific age group. Same reason was stated by a female Javanese dumpling seller in Petra. She is 8 years older and knows that most of the students are Chinese but she preferred this general term which was *kak*. She explained her understanding of considering it as suitable to be used towards young male and female despite their ethnicities (Johns & Stokes, 1977). A male Ambonese produced this term as he is used to use this term back in his hometown. An employee and a cashier working at Matahari Department Store used *kak* due to the regulation for every employee serving customer. However, unless they could obviously see that their interlocutor was a middle aged man with big stomach and thick moustache walking with children, or an old man with wrinkles and hair turning grey, *kak* would be appropriate to be used as an address term.

#### **Indonesian – *pak* and *bu***

A security and a female customer service rep working in Plasa Marina chose *pak* as that was the rule their superiors gave. Moreover, they want to show respect and professionalism whenever someone needs assistance. Additionally, a police officer's response strengthens the baseline that relationship between addressor and addressee plays a vital role here. Besides the rule he had to obey, this officer was concerned about his role as a servant serving society and those who needed help. Police is there to serve. There is no point of feeling more superior due to uniforms or badges. His point of view says that a man, even the young one, would feel honored if he is called with *pak*. So does with *bu*.

#### **Indonesian – *nak***

As abbreviated from 'child' in Indonesian, *anak*, this term was used by university staffs. They were more comfortable using this term due to the assumption that this term could be used towards male and female students despite their ethnicities. In addition, they believed that all students are younger than them, so they have this term as the most suitable one. One staff expected to have a friendly relationship with students as they pay attention to their status in the university, working to serve students. By having a lesser social distance, they hope they could assist students better.

#### **Dutch – *om* and *tante***

A 16-year-old Javanese boy wandering around when M came out from KFC Ahmad Yani said, "*Makasih, Om*" [Thank you, Sir] after M then took out a sheet of 10,000 IDR and put it in the donation-for-orphans box the boy was carrying around. According to him, those who have money are usually *om*. "*Kalo mas-mas gitu mana ngasi. Yang ngasi duit ya biasanya om-om yang sukses*" [If they are *mas-mas*, they will not donate anything. Those who donate money are usually successful middle-aged man (*om-om*)]. Such understanding really influences his awareness in addressing someone with a particular term.

Tante was used by a Chinese mother talking to her son, "*Yuk, kenalan sama tante*" [Here, let's meet auntie]. For the mother, this kinship term does not only refer to an old lady, but also to other older females. Even for a girl having nephews or nieces, she is supposed to be called *tante* in Dutch or *a'ik* in Chinese.

#### **Dutch – *nyo* and *nonik***

The chance to expose M & F to elderly people resulted in the finding of *nyo* and *nonik*. As abbreviated from *sinyo*, *nyo* was used in colonial times as a pejorative term for Dutch Indo-European or Eurasian men (Hoven in Taylor, 1983). Most of the elders sent to the nursing house are Chinese. Most of the times, they were communicating in Chinese language. They spoke Indonesian to their caretakers and visitors coming to deliver donations. They wanted to feel close and used to call their grandchildren with terms *nyo* and *nik* when they were still at home. The lineage of Dutch from their ancestors could possibly be the cause of the use of Dutch term.

From *nonik*, there was also the kinship term *non* used by a Javanese female selling meatballs near Petra Christian University. In her opinion, there is a tendency for *non* to be used by addressor with lower social status to an addressee with higher status as this term shows respect as a maid talking to his/her master's daughter. Seller – buyer status does not matter much for her since she just wants her customers to be comfortable with her and finally buy her food.

#### ∅ (zero) term

Zero kinship term was also found in the result. This means there was no kinship term or any address term used to address M and F. A cleaning service used no kinship term after he received some money as tip for cleaning the spoiled soda. A street-parking operator referred to his profession which requires him to work fast since cars and motorcycles come and go pretty fast. Other comments in line with the parking man's were from fast food and ice cream shop cashiers. They are expected to work fast and effective while making sure that every customer gets what they want to buy. There is no time to consider their age or even ethnicity. Just with a smile complementing their gratitude or thank you are enough for them to leave the impression of friendliness, respect, and professionalism on the customers.

Being slightly different, a Chinese sales person girl selling laptop and a credit card SPG preferred not to use any term since they could not really identify whether the customer was, for example, a Chinese or a Javanese or inter-ethnic. They were afraid if the term would not be comfortable for the interlocutor as a friend once shared an experience of a customer walking away getting a bit nerve by being called *om* instead of *pak*.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

With the effort of exposing M and F to same, or at least similar, addressors and settings, similar opinions and answers are brought up by addressors for every kinship term they produce. According to addressors' point of view, there are two general things one might think about in the process of selecting an appropriate kinship term. First thing is the addressor's own aspects. The reason of using of kinship term depends on the addressors themselves. Addressors tend to make use of their own comprehended info when addressing others. These info and comprehension are divided into ethnicity, settings, transactional status and function, and prior knowledge and personal preference. The next thing is the aspects of the addressee, which include physical features and visible appearance.

From the analysis, addressors do not really consider whom they are talking to, as what they consider the most is themselves. What they consider is everything about themselves, especially, prior knowledge and personal preferences. Another thing strengthening the high position of addressor's aspects over addressee's is that addressors pay attention the place of the conversation. Chinese terms, for instance, are mostly used in Chinese-dominated places such as Pasar Atom, Petra Christian University, Galaxy Mall, while Javanese terms are used in traditional market or crowded streets. Moreover, addressors consider the common way of addressing people rather than the addressee they are speaking with. Since addressors do not have enough time to dig information about/from addressees, they just apply the common knowledge of how one should be called using what kinship terms. According to Grunig, Grunig & Toth (2007), the emphasis of communication among Asian cultures is relationship building and maintenance. However, addressors concern about their aspects, as previously explained, in the process of choosing the most appropriate kinship terms. This might also be due to the short meeting time between them.

Further studies might involve more addressees with more ethnicities rather than just Chinese, Javanese, and Dutch. Higher number of chances to expose addressees to more various addressors different in ethnicity, age group, and occupation might also result in richer findings. This could be

very useful for enriching the knowledge of addressing across cultures or ethnics without being racist, uncomfortable, or disrespectful.

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