

**ADDRESS TERMS IN WERNER'S *FRONT OF THE CLASS*: A
SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY**

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Abstract

This research is aimed at identifying the types, the functions, and the social factors that affect the use of address terms by the characters in *Front of the Class*. This research used a qualitative method because of its explanatory nature. The data were in the form of sentences while the context of the data was conversations. The results show that firstly, all types of address terms are used by the characters with first name as the most common type since the scenes in the movie mainly portray the conversations among the ones closed to each other. Secondly, the function of address terms commonly used is to show intimacy. Thirdly, not all social factors of address terms are found. Particular occasion, age, family relationship, occupational hierarchy, transactional status, and degree of intimacy are the social factors that affect the use of address terms by the characters. Degree of intimacy is the social factor that commonly affects the characters since the movie also tells the relationship between the main character and his closed ones. However, social status, gender and race do not affect the characters. The settings of the movie which are mainly a place that requires high level of education cause the absence of social, gender, and racial discrimination issues.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, address terms, *Front of the Class*

INTRODUCTION

In a communication, people sometimes results in use a certain language in order to misunderstanding. Sometimes, they make everything in their mind also do not know the rules of conveyed clearly and effectively. language use in a different culture from theirs. This ignorance of the However, expressing thoughts is rules also results in sometimes difficult for many people to do. In addition, this difficulty mis understanding between them. For

instance, when someone addresses the one they just meet as same as they do to their friends, they may be regarded as impolite and rude. In other words, people sometimes cannot successfully create an effective communication with the addressee. Therefore, one should not only know the rules of the language but also the rules of the culture.

One of the means of creating an effective communication is by understanding the use of address terms. Address terms is the way people call or address the listener or the addressee. According to Wardhaugh (2006: 268), there are various ways on how people address others such as by using title, first name, last name, etc. The choice of using certain types of address terms are reflected in the status of the speaker. The status can include their occupational background and relationship. For instance, the one who addresses his or her lecturer by using his or her first name instead of using title plus last name will be regarded as impolite and rude. Therefore, it can be said that address terms is a serious thing that has to be

learned for achieving the effective communication most people want.

The address terms topic seems interesting to be conducted as the topic of the research since it is a simple thing that can ruin a communication event if the participants do not know how to deal with it. Address terms phenomenon occurs in everyday life as it is bound to language and society. However, this phenomenon can also happen in a movie as it is a reflection of real life experience. Also, a movie is regarded as a reflection of a society in seeing the world by their perspectives including how they use a language. Therefore, the researcher becomes interested in conducting a movie as an object of the research.

The movie the researcher chooses as the object of the research is a movie directed by Peter Werner, *Front of the Class*. The reason is that besides this movie is an inspirational movie for the researcher, it also provides various settings that will enable the characters perform address terms frequently as they meet many people with different occupational and social backgrounds

from theirs. Seeing this phenomenon, the researcher believes that various types of address terms are employed in this movie. Therefore, in order to reveal the phenomena of address terms in a movie, the researcher chooses *Front of the Class* as the object of this research.

This research has three objectives, i.e. to identify the types of address terms in *Front of the Class*, to identify the functions of address terms in *Front of the Class*, and to describe the social factors that affect the use of address terms by the characters in *Front of the Class*.

In revealing the objectives, the researcher takes some theories as the reference. In terms of the types of address terms, Wardhaugh's and Chaika's theories are used in this research. According to Wardhaugh (2006: 268), address terms are categorized into first name (FN), title plus last name (TLN), title alone (T), last name (LN), pet name (PN), and kinship term (KT). In addition, Chaika (1982: 47-50) states that there are five types of address terms that people can use to address others, i.e. first name (FN), title plus last

name (TLN), title only (T), last name (LN), and special nickname (SN).

In revealing the functions of address terms, the researcher uses Chaika's theory as the reference. According to Chaika (1982:46), the functions of address terms are to show intimacy, power difference, and respect.

In revealing the social factors that affect the use of address terms by the characters in *Front of the Class*, the researcher uses Wardhaugh's theory. Wardhaugh (2006: 272) states that the social factors that affect the use of address terms by someone are particular occasion, social status, gender, age, family relationship, occupational hierarchy, transactional status (i.e. service encounter, or doctor-patient relationship), race, and degree of intimacy.

Sociolinguistics is the main approach used in this research. Stockwell (2007: 264) defines sociolinguistics as the branch of linguistics which investigates the relationship between language and society. It is concerned with the language use in society since

language is the primary tool to communicate in society. Holmes (1992:1) adds that sociolinguistics is concerned with explaining why people speak differently in a different social context and with identifying the social functions of the language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative method since the data of this research were explanatory in nature. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:310) define a qualitative research as a type of study which creates a descriptive text of the phenomena under study. Furthermore, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:167) state that the aim of the qualitative research is more descriptive than predictive.

The data of this research were in the form of sentences, and the context of the data was conversations.

Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:189) state that there are four types of data collection technique in qualitative studies. They are interviewing (face-to-face question

answer process), ethnographic observation (observing people enacting culture), analysis of documents and material culture (written texts and cultural artifacts), and visual analysis (interpreting of mediated communication text such as films or television program). As the type of this research was a qualitative research, this research employed analysis of documents and material culture in which the sentences containing address terms in the conversation scripts were analyzed and visual analysis as this research used a movie as the object of the research.

In creating a trustworthy research, the researched did the four criteria proposed by Guba. Guba in Shenton (2004: 65) states that the four criteria are credibility, transerability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher also did triangulation to test the data and the data analysis. The triangulation was done by supervising the data of the research to his supervisors.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In terms of the first objective of the research, the findings show

that all types of address terms are all used by the characters. The type of address terms that is commonly used in the movie is first name since the conversation of the movie mostly happens among the characters who share a high level of intimacy such as the main character and his mother. Title plus last name is also the type of address terms typically used in this movie. Being a teacher makes the main character respected by his pupils. One of the ways to show respect toward the addressee is by using title plus last name.

In terms of the second objective, the findings show that the functions of address terms in *Front of the Class* are to show power difference, to show intimacy, and to show respect. To show intimacy is the function of address terms that is commonly used in the movie since the scene mostly tells the main character having a conversation with his dearest ones including his mother, his father, and his little brother. To show respect is also a typical function of address terms used by the characters since the scene also mostly portrays the main

character teaching his pupils, so that his pupils attempt to show respect toward him. In addition, since the main character's occupation is a teacher, he attempts to assert power differences with his pupils by addressing them with their first name.

In terms of the last objective, the findings show that not all social factors of address terms are used in *Front of the Class*. The social factors affecting the characters in using address terms are particular occasion, age, family relationship, occupational hierarchy, transactional status, and degree of intimacy. On the other hand, social status, gender, and race are not the factors that affect the characters in using a certain type of address terms. The story of the movie which mainly tells a teacher's life makes social, gender, and racial discrimination impossible to be raised in the story. Therefore, social status, gender, and race are not the factors that affect the characters in using address terms. Degree of intimacy is the social factor that commonly affects the characters in the movie in choosing certain types

of address terms since the movie tells the relationship between the main character and his closed ones. In addition, rarely does transactional status affect the characters in *Front of the Class* in using a certain type of address terms as rarely do the scenes in the movie portray transactional activities.

1. **They Types of Address Terms in *Front of the Class***

The explanations of the types of address terms in *Front of the Class* along with the examples are presented below.

a. **first name**

First name is how people address other people by their first name. An example of the employment of first name in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Ellen's friend: *Oh, Ellen, these things are exquisite! You never find styles like this in California.*

Ellen Cohen: Beverly Hills. This is what everyone is wearing.

(datum 15)

The example of the employment of first name is a conversation between Ellen Cohen and her friend. The conversation happened in Ellen's high class

traveling boutique which was located at her friend's beauty salon. Ellen's friend praised Ellen's collection by saying that the clothes Ellen brought were exquisite. Moreover, she praised it in an exaggerating way by saying that the collection could not be found in California. However, Ellen tried to be low profile by saying disagreement toward her friend's praise.

In the conversation, Ellen's friend uses first name to address Ellen Cohen. The employment of first name in addressing Ellen Cohen indicates that they both have a close relationship since Ellen trusts her friend for her travelling boutique.

b. **title plus last name**

In daily conversation, people often use title plus last name to address their addressee. The use of title plus last name indicates equality. It can also indicate inequality if it is used asymmetrically. In addition, title plus last name can also be used to show respect toward the addressee. An example of the employment of title plus last name in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Heather : *Are you gonna have a good Thanksgiving, Mr. Cohen?*

Brad Cohen: Yes, I am. Me and Waffle are going to take a little trip to see my Mom in St. Louis.
(datum 160)

The example of the employment of title plus last name is a conversation between Brad Cohen and his pupil named Heather during his class. The lesson at class that day was about drawing something related to Thanksgiving. Brad Cohen approached Heather who was drawing a turkey on a paper on the class wall. He asked her what kind of Thanksgiving she would have. Asked by Brad Cohen, she asked him back about Thanksgiving he would have. Heather herself was one of the most active pupils in his class, but unfortunately she suffered from brain cancer her parents never told.

In the conversation, Heather addresses Brad Cohen with title plus last name as the setting needs a formal language use. Moreover, she attempts to show respect toward Brad Cohen since he is her teacher.

c. title alone

In a conversation, people also use title alone to address their addressee. That people address their addressee by using title alone indicates the least intimate relationship among them. an example of the employment of title alone in *Front of the Class* is presented below.

Brad Cohen: It's a thing in my brain that causes me to make weird noises.

Mr. Myer :But you could control it if you wanted to, right?

Brad Cohen: *No, sir. It's a sickness.*

(datum 68)

The conversation is between Brad Cohen and a school principal named Mr. Myer. The conversation happened when Brad Cohen was only elementary-school aged. It happened in a stage where Brad Cohen's school's orchestra had performed their action. Mr. Myer requested audience to keep in their seat and invited Brad Cohen to the stage. Mr. Myer asked Brad Cohen why he kept producing disturbing noises during the schools' orchestra performance. Brad Cohen answered

that the reason why he kept producing the noise was because of *Tourette Syndrome*. He gave an explanation to the school principal and the audience that it was an incurable disease that made him produce the noise.

In the conversation, Brad Cohen addresses Mr. Myer by using title alone since Mr. Myer is more powerful than Brad Cohen himself. The setting which is in a formal occasion, i.e. a concert attended by pupils and their parents obliges him to use a formal language. Moreover, by addressing his school principal with title alone, he attempts to show respect toward him.

d. last name

The employment of last name indicates power difference between the speaker and the addressee. People who have more power address the people who have less power by using last name or first name while in turn they who have more power are addressed by their title plus last name. An example of the employment of last name in *Front of the Class* is discussed below.

A teacher : *Cohen*. *Just go to the principal office.*

Brad Cohen: (nodding)
(datum 63)

The example of the last name in the movie is found in a conversation between Brad Cohen and a teacher. The conversation happened during Brad Cohen's elementary school era where he was always expelled from his class due to the disturbing noises he produced. In the conversation, a teacher demanded Brad Cohen to go to the principal office because the teacher could not stand anymore with the noises Brad Cohen produced. He addresses Brad Cohen by using last name.

The teacher's employment of last name in addressing Brad Cohen is to show power difference between Brad Cohen and the teacher himself. In the conversation, the one who has less power is Brad Cohen since he is only a student. Therefore, he receives his last name addressed by his teacher who is more powerful than Brad Cohen himself.

e. pet name

One of the types of address terms that indicate intimacy is pet name. Rarely is pet name used in a

formal situation as the employment of the type needs a very close relationship or high intimacy among the participants of a conversation. An example of the employment of pet name in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Ellen Cohen: *Well, honey, if they can't see what a great teacher you'd be, that is their failure, not yours.*

Brad Cohen : Well, it sure seems like my failure.
(datum 70)

The example of the employment of pet name is a conversation between Brad Cohen and Ellen Cohen, Brad Cohen's mother. The conversation was via telephone. Brad Cohen felt upset and angry after he had a bad interview with a school principal. On the telephone, he said that the school principal only paid attention on his *Tourette Syndrome*. As a mother, Ellen Cohen attempted to convince her son that it was not his fault to blame. At the end, she could convince him by saying that he would find the best school for him soon.

In the conversation, Ellen Cohen addresses her son by pet name. It indicates that they have a high level of intimacy since they are mother and son.

f. kinship terms

Kinship terms are the type of address terms commonly used among family members. It is a term to address a family member including father, mother, brother, and sister. People usually employ kinship terms to show intimacy and to show respect toward their addressee. An example of the employment of kinship terms is discussed as follows.

Brad Cohen: *I can't go in the library. They'll throw me out. Please, Mom.*

Ellen Cohen: All right, com'ere. Sit over here.
(datum 36)

The example of the employment of kinship terms is a conversation between Brad Cohen and Ellen Cohen. The conversation happened when Brad Cohen was expelled from his school because there were a lot of teachers who could not stand from the noises he produced. Ellen Cohen brought him to a library and asked him to enter

the library. She did that to conduct a little research on what happened to her son. However, Brad Cohen disagreed with his mom who wanted to bring him in. He thought that the people in the library would throw him out because of the noises he would produce. She realized it and requested her son to wait for her outside.

In the conversation, Brad Cohen addresses his mother with a kinship term. Kinship term is a type of address terms that can show intimacy and at the same time, respect toward the addressee. In the conversation, Brad Cohen uses the kinship term to show intimacy with his mother. The employment of the kinship term is also as a result of the family relationship they both have.

g. special nickname

Special nickname is used by people who have an intimate relationship with each other such as among close friends and family members. Special nickname is functioned to show intimacy among the participants in a conversation. The employment of special nickname is usually based on degree

of intimacy and family relationship. An example of the employment of special nickname in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Ellen Cohen: *Come on, Bobo. We're here to learn. Let's start learning.*

Brad Cohen: (nodding)
(datum 53)

The example of the employment of special nickname in *Front of the Class* is a conversation between Brad Cohen and Ellen Cohen. The conversation took place in front of a Church where a support group of people with *Tourette Syndrome* would gather. Ellen Cohen attempted to enroll her son to the support group in order to make him accepted and motivated. However, Brad Cohen felt uncomfortable to be in the group and decided not to come in the Church. Ellen Cohen persuaded him to come in and learn something from the support group, and Brad Cohen agreed with it.

In the conversation, Ellen Cohen uses special nickname to address Brad Cohen. The employment of special nickname by Ellen Cohen indicates that they have

a close relationship since they are mother and son.

2. The Functions of Address Terms in *Front of the Class*

The explanations of the functions of address terms in *Front of the Class* along with the examples are discussed below.

a. to show power difference

An example of address terms types to show power difference in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Brad Cohen: *OK. Well, Thomas, if you want to leave your seat, you have to ask for permission.*

Thomas : Weirdo.
(datum 118)

The example of a type of address terms to show power difference is a conversation between Brad Cohen and his pupil named Thomas. The conversation took place at Brad Cohen's class room. Thomas was caught red-handed leaving the class without his permission. However, as the one who always made problems for teachers, Thomas replied Brad Cohen by saying weirdo.

In the conversation, Brad Cohen addresses Thomas with first name. The employment of first name is to show power difference between Thomas and Brad Cohen. As a teacher, Brad Cohen has more power than Thomas. Thus, the less powerful one, Thomas, is addressed with first name by the more powerful one, Brad Cohen.

b. to show intimacy

An example of the address terms to show intimacy in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Brad Cohen: *I fell in love with Atlanta when I worked down here as a camp counselor. I live here now, so does my **Dad** and my Stepmom.*

A recruiter: Well, it's nice to have family here to give you support.
(datum 3)

The example of the type of address terms to show intimacy is a conversation between Brad Cohen and a recruiter. The conversation took place at Atlanta Regional Board of Education in the recruiter's room. The recruiter interviewed Brad Cohen about many things, and one of which was why Brad Cohen chose

Atlanta as the place where he wanted to be a teacher. Brad Cohen answered that he fell in love with Atlanta, and his father also lived in Atlanta.

In the conversation, when Brad Cohen is talking to the recruiter he addresses his father by a kinship term. The employment of the kinship term can be to show intimacy and to show respect toward the addressee. In this case, Brad Cohen uses the kinship term to show intimacy with his father. He uses *Dad* rather than *Father* in addressing his father even though the setting needs the formality in language use.

c. to show respect

An example of the address terms to show respect in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Heather : *Are they ever gonna make you well, Mr. Cohen?*

Brad Cohen: Well. Right now there's no medicine that can cure Tourette's. But, it's okay. Cuz I've learned to accept it and I don't let it run my life.
(datum 115)

The example of the type of address terms to show respect is a

conversation between Heather and Brad Cohen. The conversation took place in Brad Cohen's class room during his first day of teaching. Brad Cohen was telling the class his *Tourette Syndrome*, and Heather asked him a question whether the disease could be cured or not. Brad Cohen answered that the disease was incurable. However, in front of his pupils he attempted to be a positive role model by saying that the disease could not make him sad since he had learned to accept the disease.

In the conversation, Brad Cohen is addressed with his title plus last name by Heather. Heather uses the title plus last name to show respect toward her teacher. Talking to the one who is more powerful than the rest of the people in the class obliges her to use a formal language and to be polite to Brad Cohen.

3. The Social Factors That Affect the Use of Address Terms by the Characters in *Front of the Class*

The explanations of the social factors that affect the use of address terms in *Front of the Class* along

with the examples are discussed below.

a. particular occasion

An example of particular occasion that affects the characters in *Front of the Class* is discussed as follows.

Hilarie Straka: *The fun starts Monday, Brad. Let me know if there's anything you need.*

Brad Cohen : I need everything.
(datum 102)

The example of particular occasion affecting the characters in the movie in using a certain type of address terms is a conversation between Hilarie Straka and Brad Cohen. The conversation took place in Brad Cohen's class room. It happened when Brad Cohen was, for the first time, accepted by the Mountain View Elementary School to be a teacher for the second grade. Hilarie Straka asked Brad Cohen what he needed to fill his new class room. Brad Cohen answered her happily that he needed everything.

In the conversation, Hilarie Straka addresses Brad Cohen with first name. For the ones who just know each other, the employment of first name by Hilarie Straka to

address Brad Cohen is as an attempt to welcome Brad Cohen. The employment of first name by Hilarie Straka is to make Brad Cohen accepted by her and feel close to her.

b. Age

An example of age that affects the characters in *Front of the Class* in choosing a certain type of address terms is discussed as follows.

Norman Cohen: *I like Nancy. She reminds me of your Mom when we first met.*

Brad Cohen : They don't look anything alike.
(datum 205)

The example of age factor that affects the characters in the movie in using a certain type of address terms is a conversation between Brad Cohen and Norman Cohen. The conversation took place in Norman Cohen's working area. Norman Cohen praised Nancy Lazarus and liked her. He said to Brad Cohen that she was like his ex wife, Ellen Cohen. However, Brad Cohen disagreed with Norman Cohen's statement saying that Nancy Lazarus and Ellen Cohen did not look similar to each other.

In the conversation, Norman Cohen addresses Nancy Lazarus by her first name. The employment of first name by Norman Cohen is influenced by the factor of age between Norman Cohen and Nancy Lazarus. As the older one, Norman Cohen addresses the one who is younger than himself, Nancy Lazarus, with first name.

c. family relationship

An example of family relationship that affects the characters in *Front of the Class* in choosing a certain type of address terms is discussed as follows.

Ellen Cohen: You know, you make her happy, Brad. She told me that, Brad. You make her laugh.

Brad Cohen: *Well, what if one day she stops laughing? What if one day she gets fed up of living with someone who I just, I don't want to hurt her,*
Mom.

(datum 186)

The example of family relationship factor that affects the characters in the movie in using a certain type of address terms is a conversation between Ellen Cohen

and Brad Cohen. The conversation took place in the dining room of Ellen Cohen's house. It happened when Brad Cohen brought Nancy Lazarus to his house. Brad Cohen felt insecure from the state that Nancy liked him. He did not want to hurt Nancy Lazarus in the days to come. Ellen Cohen attempted to make her son relax.

In the conversation, Brad Cohen addresses Ellen Cohen by using a kinship term. The family relationship they have makes Brad Cohen use the kinship term in addressing his mother. The employment of the kinship term is to show intimacy with Ellen Cohen.

d. occupational hierarchy

An example of occupational hierarchy that affects the characters in *Front of the Class* in choosing a certain type of address terms is discussed as follows.

Mr. Myer : The school orchestra's having a concert this afternoon. You planning on going?

Brad Cohen: *No, sir. My tics will ruin the music.*

(datum 64)

The example of occupational hierarchy factor that affects the characters in the movie in using a certain type of address terms is a conversation between Mr. Myer and Brad Cohen. The conversation took place at MR. Myer's office. Mr. Myer asked Brad Cohen to come to the school orchestra's concert. However, Brad Cohen rejected the invitation because he was afraid that his *Tourette Syndrome* would ruin the concert.

In the conversation, Mr. Myer is addressed with title alone by Brad Cohen. Mr. Myer's occupational status which is higher than Brad Cohen's makes him addressed by title alone. The employment of title alone by Brad Cohen is to show respect toward Mr. Myer as the school principal.

e. transactional status

An example of transactional status that affects the characters in *Front of the Class* in choosing a certain type of address terms is discussed as follows.

A golf official : *I'm sorry, sir? I'm going to have to ask you to stop making those noises.*

Jeff Cohen : Look, pal. He's not doing it on purpose, he's got.
(datum 97)

The example of transactional status that affects the characters in the movie in choosing a certain type of address terms is a conversation between a golf official and Jeff Cohen. The conversation took place in a golf arena. It happened when the golf official realized that Brad Cohen produced disturbing noises that would disturb other users' concentration. The golf official informed Brad Cohen to stop producing noises. Seeing his older brother protested, Jeff Cohen objected it by saying that his brother did not produce the sounds on purpose.

In the conversation, the golf official addresses Brad Cohen by using title alone. The occupational status of Brad Cohen which is a customer of the golf arena makes him respected by the golf official. The employment of title alone in addressing Brad Cohen is to show respect.

f. degree of intimacy

An example of degree of intimacy that affects the characters in *Front of the Class* in choosing a certain type of address terms is discussed as follows.

Brad Cohen: Can I talk to Dad?

Ellen Cohen: *Can you just wait a minute, honey?*

(datum 42)

The example of degree of intimacy factor that affects the characters in the movie in using a certain type of address terms is a conversation between Brad Cohen and Ellen Cohen. The conversation took place at Ellen Cohen's house. It happened when Ellen Cohen was telephoning Norman Cohen. Seeing his father and mother were debating over himself, Brad Cohen requested Ellen Cohen to give him a time to talk to his father. However, Ellen Cohen postponed his request.

In the conversation, Ellen Cohen addresses Brad Cohen by using pet name. The employment of pet name by Ellen Cohen indicates that they have a high level of intimacy, and it also stresses that they have a really close relationship as they are mother and son.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, three conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, all types of address terms proposed by Wardhaugh and Chaika are used in *Front of the Class* with first name and title plus last name as the types of address terms commonly used in the movie since the scenes of the movie mainly portray the conversations among characters that share high level of intimacy and since the main character of the movie is a teacher. Being a teacher makes him respected by his pupils.

Secondly, the functions of address terms are all commonly used by the characters since the scenes mainly narrate the characters who have a high level of intimacy such as among family and the main character's occupation as a teacher which makes him respected by his pupils.

Lastly, not all social factors proposed by Wardhaugh affect the characters in using address terms. The social factors that affect the characters in using address terms are particular occasion, age, family

relationship, occupational hierarchy, transactional status, and degree of intimacy. Degree of intimacy is the social factor that commonly affects the characters in the movie in using address terms since the conversations are mainly among the characters who have a high level of intimacy. On the other hand, social status, gender, and race are not the social factors that affect the characters in the movie in using address terms. The story of the movie which mainly tells a teacher's life makes social, gender, and racial discrimination impossible to be raised in the story. Therefore, social status, gender, and race are not the types of address terms that affect the characters in *Front of the Class* in using address terms.

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