

# Analyzing Address Forms in Chinese and Javanese: A Comparative Study

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**Abstract**—Chinese have their own language system to address other people in their society, and so have Javanese. The different forms of addressing terms are significant because it is the most vivid way to reveal the social relationship of the people in their society. The different ways of using address forms can be seen from various aspects, such as the use of names, titles, kinship terms, and personal pronouns. Meanwhile, the analysis of these varieties convey the issues of social distribution between the speakers, the addressee, and the culture as a whole. By presenting a comparison of address forms between Chinese and Javanese, this research would like to discover the varieties of address forms used in both cultures and the factors that may influence the choices they make. This research, however, does not only present the similarities and differences of address forms used in these two different cultures, but also the analysis of the aspects that may affect the decisions. The data used are collected from a combination of questionnaires and interviews, while the subject of this study is a diverse range of age of female and male Chinese in Taiwan and of Javanese in Java, Indonesia. The result of this research shows that the category of address forms shared by Chinese people is slightly different with the types of address forms used by Javanese people. However, address forms from both cultures of Chinese and Javanese reveal similar social distribution of power relations, solidarity that leads to intimacy, and formality. Moreover, the factors that influence the choices are varied from occupational status, gender, age, number of language, origins or living place, and the social status of both the speakers and addressees.

**Keywords**—*address forms; Chinese; Javanese; culture; social relationship*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Address forms is the simplest language used when we are speaking to other people but the inappropriate choice of the address forms shows the speaker's incompetence in positioning him/herself in the society. Thus, it is important to see how different people view the different choices of address forms in their society. Furthermore, analyzing address forms from different perspectives of language and cultures might result in unpredicted consideration. Because each address form favorably shares high cultures and language, Chinese and Javanese were chosen to be the focus of the study. The absence of previous research conducted in

these two languages also becomes the major reason of conducting the research. Similar previous studies about address forms have been conducted in both languages, but never been compared nor analyzed thoroughly (Fasold, 1990; C. Geertz, 1972). Some researches focus on the comparison between address forms in Chinese and English (Chen, 2010; Chunrong, 2015; Gao, 2013) or Javanese and English (Fauziah, 2014). While some others concentrate more on the address forms of Chinese (Chao, 1956; Zhao, 2014) or Javanese only (Iragiliati, 2006; Krisnanda, 2014).

Meanwhile, the analysis of these varieties convey the issues of culture between the speakers, the addressee, and the society as a whole. By presenting a comparison of address forms between Chinese and Javanese, this research would like to discover the varieties of address forms used in both cultures and the factors that may influence the choices. This research, however, presents both the similarities and differences of address forms used in Chinese and Javanese cultures and also the analysis of the aspects that affect the choices of address forms. Thus, there are two research questions discussed in this study: (1) What are the similarities and differences between Chinese and Javanese's address forms? And (2) What factors influence the choices of the address forms?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Types of address forms and their social distribution*

Most people use language in order to communicate with other people. However, it is not the only purpose of language. Language can be the instruments to determine the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Moreover, it can also be used to identify themselves as part of the social group and to establish the kind of speech event they are in (Fasold, 1990). For that reason, the most recognizable language to show all of the three functions is address forms. According to Fasold, "address forms are defined as the words used by speakers to designate the addressee while they are talking to them". He also categorizes the address forms like in many languages, mostly Western, into two main kinds of address forms:

names and second-person pronoun. Meanwhile, in Chinese, some researches on address forms have been done and each has different category in differentiating the types of address forms. Among them are four categories of address forms as proposed by Li Chunrong: the use of names, titles, kinship terms, and personal pronouns (Chunrong, 2015). Nevertheless, researches on address forms in Javanese mostly divide the category into six: names, kinship terms, fun nicknames (*paraban*), titles, transposition of adjectives, and irritating nicknames (*poyokan*) (Wibowo & Retnaningsih, 2015). In spite of this, the address forms in this research are divided into four categories based on the findings and analysis: the second personal pronouns, kinship terms, titles plus names, and nicknames. Moreover, the domains provided are amongst three different areas: at home, school, and work place.

Not only particular locations, people use different address forms in different situations, varies on the speaker's position, the addressee, and other several factors. Brown and Gilman's study in 1960 shows that the pronoun usage was socially distributed by power and solidarity, and was influenced by several factors, such as the speaker's social class, age, gender, and other social factors (Brown & Gilman, 1972). On the other hand, Brown, Ford and Ervin Tripp who conducted a study of names and titles in American English show that the variation usage of address forms is influenced by the solidarity, power, and intimacy, while the nonreciprocal pattern is ruled by two dimensions of age and occupational status (Brown, Ford, & Hymes, 1964; Ervin-Tripp, 1972). Furthermore, Fasold distributed the variation of address forms into two sources: group differences and individual basis. The group differences involve the age, social status, office setting, language of monolingual or multilingual society, demographic characteristics of rural vs. urban society, social class, and gender; while the individual basis absolutely based on specific contexts (Fasold, 1990). However, in this research some individual sources are considered as an addition to the group differences in order to analyze the social distribution of address forms and the factors that influence on the choices of address forms made by the speakers.

### B. Chinese and Javanese Cultures

Language and culture are interrelated because people's beliefs, values, traditions, religions, and social organizations are reflected through the language. Chinese and Javanese share different background of socio-cultural, history and geography; thus the societies have different ways of thinking that may influence the choices of their addressing forms. Mandarin Chinese has become the national language in Taiwan since 1970's while Javanese is the largest language spoken in Indonesia without official status. Although the written language of new Javanese form only appeared around 16<sup>th</sup> century, the old script writing of Javanese was found in 450 AD and spoken by about 80 million people (Zentz, 2014). Meanwhile, Chinese is the oldest written language in the world existed for more than 3000 years and is spoken by the entire Taiwanese population except those who were educated under Japanese rule (Eberhard, 2013). Chinese society is the extension of clan; thus it holds strong family values that can be seen through their kinship addressing forms (Yin, 2010). Although Javanese society also highly appreciates affinal relationship, it be believed that hierarchical status and age are two determining factors that influence their social relations (H. Geertz, 1989). Similar to Javanese, the feudal-

hierarchical structure also influences Chinese society deeply. Moreover, intercultural communication with other societies and languages affects the choices of addressing system on both Chinese and Javanese, respectfully. Nevertheless, this paper is limited to Mandarin Chinese used in Taiwan and Javanese used mainly in Surakarta, both in the countryside and the urban areas.

### III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The data of this research were collected from many sources by using questionnaires and interviews with the informants. Moreover, some corresponding information were also gathered from researcher's observation and experiences during interaction with the people of two different cultures of more or less one year. There were about 25 Chinese people interviewed, 15 females and 10 males. The ages are ranged from around 17 years old until more than 60 years old. Most of them understand at least 2 languages: Chinese and Taiwanese. The others are English, mostly, and Germany, Cantonese, Italian, or Spanish. Most of the people live in the city and very little information about the people in the countryside. Most of the informants are students in best schools and staffs of respectful company. Meanwhile, in Java, there were about 25 Javanese people interviewed, 10 females and 15 males. The ages are ranged from 9 until 73 years old. Most of them understand at least 2 languages: Javanese and Indonesian, only a few speak only Javanese, of a monolingual society, and the others add English as their additional language, of a multilingual society. Most of the people live in city and only a few live in the country. Those who live in the urban areas aged more than 70 years old can only speak Javanese and are working as farmers.

### IV. FINDINGS

#### A. Second Person Pronoun

In Chinese, basically there are two ways of using the second person pronoun, they are 您 /Nín/ and 你 /Nǐ/ to male and neutral or 妳 /Nǐ/ to female. 您 /Nín/ is the non-reciprocal V form used by the less powerful people to more powerful ones, while 你 /Nǐ/ and 妳 /Nǐ/ are used as mutual V, or from the more powerful people to the lesser ones. Between family members at home, 您 /Nín/ is hardly used even though some individuals admit they might slightly use it in the written form only. However, they believe that using 你 and 妳 are common in the informal situation and show more intimacy to each other. Meanwhile at school, where most students need to talk in classrooms with their teachers or professors in formal situations, 您 /Nín/ is normally used, both written and oral form. On the other hand, in informal situations outside the classroom the students use 你 /Nǐ/ and 妳 /Nǐ/ to their friends and still address 您 /Nín/ to their teachers or professors even in any informal situations. The situation at work place is similar to school, the second person pronoun of 您 /Nín/ is used to show respect to the people who are older than the speaker or to whom the speaker respects, such as the boss or manager. 你 /Nǐ/ and 妳 /Nǐ/ is the standard Mandarin Chinese's address forms of the second person pronoun, however there is no address forms of the second person pronoun in Taiwanese. It explains why some people in Taiwan try to avoid the using the second person pronoun. The reason could be caused by the different culture of Taiwanese and Chinese, so that they feel inappropriate of addressing people by the second person

pronoun. However, the youngsters feel that this is the most common address forms usage because it is applied among speakers of the same age, from the superior to the inferiors, to the most intimate speakers to complete strangers. Additionally, for some people who choose to avoid the use of second person pronoun, they would keep using the same way when they are using the titles and names or nicknames. According to these people, the using of 您 /Nín/ sounds too formal when they want to address their parents, for instance, because it doesn't show the intimacy that they hold while the using of 你 /Nǐ/ and 妳 /Nǐ/ might be inappropriate. Thus, they usually use the kinship terms as the address forms in the family because it shows affection to each other without presenting impoliteness.

Similar to Chinese, most Javanese in Java try to avoid the use of second person pronoun. They would use the title with or without name, especially from the youngsters to the elders, or among the adults. Regardless of their strangeness of the second person pronoun in Javanese, in unavoidable situation they would use the second person pronoun *Panjenengan* or *Njenengan*, in short, when speaking to their superiors in the working place. However, it only occurs in adults, because kids or youngsters around 18 would not use this. This is the highest level of Javanese's second person pronoun that is called *Krama*. However, Javanese people sometimes use *Kowe* in informal situation to their colleagues who are very intimate, or from the superiors to the inferiors. *Kowe* is the lowest form that is called as *Ngoko*. In some part of Java, people still use *Sampeyan* as the middle level of Javanese's second person pronoun address forms, *Madya*. However, in Central Java, particularly, this address form is not very popular anymore because the essential of giving respect to other people who only a few years older than you by using this address form is replaced by the language attitudes or prejudices that *Madya* is used only by the people of low social status or those who live in the rural, that belong to certain society or culture. Therefore, many people would use *Panjenengan* instead to show respect to the superiors and *Kowe* to the inferiors to share intimacy. Again, it is common to use it at work place, but hardly to use it at home or school.

### B. Kinship Terms

Different families have their own way to address each other. Generally speaking, they would call their father with 爸爸 /Bàba/ or one syllable of 爸 /Bà/ and mother with 媽媽 /Māmā/ or shortened with one syllable of 媽 /Mā/. However, this is not always true to all families. Some families would choose different ways to call their parents. Therefore, the kinship terms, especially among the family at home would be of some group or individual differences. They might go with a more traditional way such as 老爸 /Lǎobà/, 父親 /Fùqīn/, or 老啊 /Lǎo a/ as the address forms to their father and 母親 /Mǔqīn/ or 木啊 /Mù a/ to their mother. The reasons of calling them differently besides of their origins or living place, are also to show more intimacy and to preserve a traditional way of addressing the elders similar to the early time. Furthermore, the address forms to their grandparents are also different. Normally, they would address their grandparents from their father different with the grandparents from their mother. The other reason is because it also depends on their origin and the language they are speaking. Most grandparents speak monolingual and that determines their address forms. They would use 爺爺 /Yéyé/ for *Grandpa* and 奶奶 /Nǎinai/ for *Grandma*. Additionally,

they also come up with their own ways to addressing them for the reasons of preserving traditional way of early times and showing more intimacy by using the address forms such as 阿公 /Āgōng/ and 阿嬤 /Āmā/ or 外公 /Wàigōng/, 爺 /Yé/ and 外嬤 /Wàimā/. Furthermore, they also have various ways of addressing their brothers and sisters. Most people would use 哥哥 /Gēgē/ or 哥 /Gē/ or 老哥 /Lǎogē/ for older brother and 弟弟 /Dìdì/ or 弟 /Dì/ or 小弟 /Xiǎodì/ for younger brother. Similar to their sister, they would address 姐姐 /Jiějiě/ or 姐 /Jiě/ for older sister and 妹妹 /Mèimei/ or 妹 /Mèi/ for younger sister. In some individual preferences, a female subject was told to call her younger brother by 老哥 /Lǎogē/ without any reason, and she would be addressed by 姐 /Jiě/. However, some people directly address their younger brother/sister's first name or even their full name, and some others would create nicknames to their siblings. Other interesting facts is the way husband and wife call each other by using 老公 /Lǎogōng/ and 老婆 /Lǎopó/ that literally denote *Husband* and *Wife*. It is very common for the people in Taiwan and they said that it is a cute way to show their close relationship. While to their kid, they usually find a cute way to call them too, such as 寶貝 /Bǎobèi/ or *Baby*. Furthermore, Chinese people use of kinship terms nowadays to the non-kins, especially, has a shift of purpose, which is to show friendliness to each other.

Currently, children and teenagers under the age of 13 in the cities of Central Java would mostly address their parents with *Mama* or *Mamah* or *Bunda* and *Papa* or *Papah* or *Ayah* as an effect of modern society. As we know that most countries in the world call their parents with *Mama* and *Papa* because they are the first word-like sounds made by babbling babies (Jakobson, 1960). Another reason is also because Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch and thus the address forms of *Mama* and *Papa* are already familiar, imitated by the Javanese people especially those who have higher social status and receive better education. Thus, only a few older people around 30 years old choose to address *Mama* and *Papa*. However, it is not always true because achieving high social status and pursuing higher education do not always become the major reason of addressing forms because some of them still choose to call their parents by *Ibu* or sometimes pronounced by *Ibuk*, *Buk'e* or only *Buk* to most Javanese people and *Ayah* or *Bapak*, *Pak'e* or *Pak* like the majority of Javanese people, or even creating a traditional way dating back to the early time by using *Simbok*, *Mbok*, *Biyung*, *Mamak*, *Mak* and *Bapa* or *Rama*.

This is a matter of choice, but mostly the origins, the living place, and the monolingual addressee are the most influential factors. However, sometimes the addressing forms can change through times. For example, in a monolingual society in Java, they may address the parents by calling their first child's name. If their first child is *Wanti*, then they would call the mother or father by using *Wanti* or only one syllable like *Ti* to make it shorter and easier. Other address forms in the Javanese family are so many to describe because it depends on the age hierarchical of who is older than whom, related to the marital status of who is getting married to whom, and their social status in the society. Nevertheless, the address forms to call their children are various depending on their origins, the gender of their children, and their social status. For example, in the village or in the city where they still want to preserve Javanese tradition through language and other lifestyle, they would call their son by using *Le* as shortened from *Thole* or *Nang* for a higher social class people. While to their

daughters, they would address *Nduk* as shortened from *Gendhuk* or *Wuk* that basically represent their organs of reproduction.

Not only at home, address forms of kinship terms also take place in the offices. Different work place carries different ways of addressing their colleagues, their inferiors, and their superiors. Besides considering the speakers and the addressees, the choice of kinship terms at work place also depends on the solidarity and the formality of situations. If it is informal, they might address each other unlike the more formal ones. An intense and long relationship that assumed to be more sort of brothers/sisters than friends also affect the way they address each other. The most formal address forms to the superiors are *Pak* and *Bu* that literally means *Father* and *Mother* similar to how they call their parents at home, but this time they use it to address other people, and usually followed by their names, so in this situation *Pak* and *Bu* is *Mr.* and *Mrs.* in English, though the names are sometimes not really necessary. Meanwhile, the informal ones used only to the inferiors or colleagues that show higher solidarity, they may use the kinship terms such as *Pakdhe*, *Budhe*, *Om*, *Tante*, or *Mas* and *Mbak* that literally denote to *Uncle*, *Aunt*, *Brother*, and *Sister*. Age is also one other factors determining the address forms but still, it is the second consideration after social status, because even if the boss is younger, they would still call them *Pak* and *Bu* or *Mr./Sir* and *Mrs./Madame* but never *Mas* and *Mbak* or *Brother* and *Sister* because it shows more respect to the addressee. However, sometimes it is tricky for addressing the subordinates who are older than the speaker because some older people would call them *Mas* or *Mbak* while the younger people with higher social status seems to think it is inappropriate to call them *Mas* and *Mbak* for they are way older than them. This situation is sometimes personal and they have their own way to solve the problem, but mostly will consider age as more important factor because Javanese people still hold the norms or respecting older people. Other significant factors that sometimes occur in Javanese society are the marital status of the addressee, the gender issues of women addressee might want to be addressed younger than their age, and the high solidarity they share between the speaker and the addressee.

### C. Titles and Names

At school or campus, people usually address their teachers or professors by using 老師 /*Lǎoshī*/ for *Teacher* or *Professor*. Meanwhile, to the principle, dean, or director, they would use 校長 /*Xiàozhǎng*/ or *President* or 院長 /*Yuànzhǎng*/ or *Dean*, depends on their position or title. Furthermore, addressing their classmates, seniors, or juniors, they would directly use their first names. To the parking man, office boy, or security guy, they would address their last name, if they know them, and the title, such as 王先生 /*Wáng Xiānshēng*/ or *Mr. Wang* and 林小姐 /*Lín Xiǎojiě*/ or *Miss Lin* to respect them. For the meantime, at work place, people in Taiwan usually address their boss in different ways according to the traditions in their company. Some would prefer addressing them by their first name, while the others might use the family name and title. Even in a situation where the inferior is calling the boss only by the first name is initiated primarily from the superior to the inferior. Furthermore, the address system from the superior to the subordinate is not always mutual because a superior might address the subordinate by titles only. For example, in a case of a President and a Dean, they would use: 校長 /*Xiàozhǎng*/ and 院長 /*Yuànzhǎng*/ to each other and the

President might also call the Dean by using 林院長 /*Lín Yuànzhǎng*/, which is title and name but the Dean would never address the President by title and name, simply a title shows the highest respect.

The way the Javanese people address their teachers, professors, deans, or principles at schools are influenced by the kinship terms because the language used in most schools are Indonesian, thus we are more familiar with the address forms of *Bapak* or *Pak*. However, sometimes we also use titles after the kinship terms such as *Pak Guru* (*Mr. Teacher*), *Pak Dekan* (*Mr. Dean*), or *Pak* followed the first name – simply because Javanese people don't have last name – for the male superior and *Ibu*, *Bu Guru*, *Bu Dekan*, or *Bu* followed by the first name, because of the same reason, for the female superior. Meanwhile, to address the classmates, seniors, or juniors, they tend to use kinship terms, such as *Mas* and *Mbak* or *Brother* and *Sister* followed by the name to show respect for they are older than them and sometimes *Dik* as shortened from *Adik* denoting *Little Sister* or *Little Brother* for the juniors, but mostly would address them by their first names.

### D. Nicknames

In any informal situation that may occur between family members at home, among colleagues or friends at school and work place, both the Chinese and Javanese people would like to use nicknames only to those who they share solidarity with. It is usually last only for a short period of time or depends on the purpose of the nicknames it is mostly to show intimacy between the speaker and the addressee. In Chinese as well in Javanese, most nicknames are only to make fun to each other. It is the fact that they may create different nick names as referents to their teachers or professors inclusively when they are talking to their close friends to show solidarity among each other. From this point of view, we may realize the importance of the using of proper address forms as it reflects the society and brings about the values of cultures. Some families use nicknames like 猴子 /*Hóuzi*/ (*Monkey*) because the kid is so active that is similar to *paraban* for Javanese society. However, some Chinese people might also use 白痴 /*Báichī*/ or *Idiot* when they are angry or to make fun of each other that is similar to *poyokan* in Javanese. The nick names are used in order to show their affections to each other.

## V. DISCUSSION

Research on address forms is not relatively new because many previous researches on both Chinese and Javanese address forms have been done before, however the other researches are not investigating these two cultures at the same inquiry as this one. Therefore, some new findings related to the use of address forms and their aspects of preferences are developed. Chinese's address form for the second person pronouns of 您 /*Nín*/ and 你 /*Ni*/ is less popular type of address forms. Gao (2013) in his study mentioned that the second person pronoun is not used to draw attention, but all address forms are not dedicated to draw attention, because in most cultures, it is considered impolite. Any address forms are used when the addressee is ready to talk to the speaker (Fasold 1990). Moreover, according to Chunrong (2015), 您 /*Nín*/ is largely replaced by 你 /*Ni*/ but in this research, many respondents admit that they still actively use 您 /*Nín*/ especially to show respect to the older person and to those with higher social status. Meanwhile, Sukesti (2000) particularly discussed about the

second person pronoun in Javanese, and she mentioned the three different categories that involves the address forms to show respect, not to show respect, and to show neutrality. The findings in my research are slightly different because not many people use the second category, but more only on the neutral and showing respect due to the shift of language attitude. However, the choice of this type of address forms supports her analysis that is based on age, friendliness, social status, and occupation.

In kinship terms, Chinese and Javanese share similarities in the area of intentions that both cultures want to show intimacy and friendliness especially to the non-kins, however the kinship terms in Chinese is much more complicated because they are affected by the traditional, hierarchical and vertical structures clan society with feudalistic characteristics (Yin, 2010). Moreover, Confucianism as the majority believes in clan system, seniority, feudal ethics, gender, blood and marriage as the very important concept (Chunling 2015). Meanwhile, the practice of kinship terms in Javanese has slightly shifted because a few of respondents in my research have different ways of using the kinship terms, mostly because they feel like the it is the era of modernization and a shift is started to appear especially to those who live in the cities and speak multilingual. According to Yuliati (2007), this condition happens because many people want to rebel against feudalism and urbanization is more attractive to them. However, it is not true for the Javanese living in the country. They still hold the traditional way of using kinship terms, especially the use of their first child to replace the parent's names.

Titles and names are not very popular in Javanese, this kind of address forms is only used in formal institutions such as offices and schools, but in Chinese it still holds the most important feature because they believe that title is the symbol of social power and solidarity (Yin 2010). Thus, it is very significant to keep considering the use of the title in Chinese address forms. On the other hand, the use of nicknames in Chinese and Javanese's address forms share most of the similarities for both are used to show greater intimacy between the speaker and the addressee. However, Javanese divide the category of nicknames into *paraban* and *poyokan* (Wibowo & Retnaningsih, 2015) that is differentiated by the intention of making a joke or making them angry while Chinese only have one category that is simply used to make fun of the addressee.

## VI. Conclusion

Chinese and Javanese share similar social distribution when using the address forms. The choices of address forms among the people of these two different languages and cultures are influenced by the power relations, the high or low solidarity that leads to intimacy or familiarity, and also based on the formality and informality of situations occurred when they are using the address forms. The first address form discussed is the second person pronouns. Similar to Chinese, Javanese people are reluctant to use it because it shows low solidarity and indicates formality, such as at school or work place, but hardly appeared at home. The second address form is kinship terms. It is used by Javanese in most all areas of home, school, and work place, while for Chinese it only appears mostly at home or if it is in the outside, then it is addressed for people who share high

solidarity and familiarity. Moreover, Javanese's address forms of kinship terms are differentiated by several factors, such as occupational status, gender, age, origins, living place, the monolingual or multilingual society, and social status. The third address form is titles plus names and alike the second personal pronouns, it is used to show power relations and denote formality when it is used, thus both in Chinese and Javanese, it happens when occupational status and social status are concerned. The last address form is nicknames. The use of nicknames in Chinese and Javanese is for fun and does not have the intention of discouraging. However, it is mostly influenced by time because as the person is getting older, the nickname will disappear. It happens both in Chinese and Javanese society.

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