

An analysis of the addressing terms used in Turkish society in the interface of alienation and intimacy

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1. Introduction

How do people address another? Sometimes it can be possible by using a title, a first name, a last name or a nick name. Or in some cultures kinship terms or gender forms are used to address another. In Turkish culture, kinship terms and intimate expressions are used quite often for addressing a stranger. They are explained to be the indicators of familiarity or wish to establish solidarity by Bayyurt and Bayraktaroğlu (2001). In their study, it is also proposed that kinship terms produce the impression that the interaction is a kind of family affair. If one addresses an old man on the street by using *amca* (lit. 'the brother of father'), nobody takes it strange in Turkish culture. That is one of the cultural schemas of Turkish people. As it is known, culture consists of whatever one has to know in order to behave in an acceptable manner to all the members of a specific culture, and the cultural values of the speakers are reflected in the way they use linguistic forms. Besides, people's understanding both themselves and others as individuals depends on the diverse linguistic practices that they experience. At that point, addressing strangers determines how the addresser perceives him/herself, who the addressee is and how close the addressee is to the addresser. Some forms of address may alienate strangers and make them "the other"; however, some others may be the signs of intimacy and elicit closeness.

What factors govern the practice of addressing? In her prevailing study on the relationship between social relations and language, Ervin-Tripp (1969) focused on the variables such as kin, gender, friend, (+/-) adult or (+/-) married in addressing. In another work, Brown and Gilman (1960) related pronouns and titles to interaction and social relations of "power" and "solidarity". König (1990) emphasized the solidarity and difference in the choices of *sen/siz* pronouns while addressing to people. She also stressed the demographic features affecting the choice of pronoun; age, kinship, generation, sex as biological variables; formality, distance, solidarity as psychological variables; and social class and social status as sociological ones. Horasan (1987: 44) also states about the demographic features that "the social variables age, sex, education, place of residence, place of birth, played an effective role in the choice of address terms and pronouns." According to Wardhaugh (1997: 270), a variety of social factors govern the choice of addressing terms; the particular occasion; the social status of the other; sex; age; family relationship, occupational hierarchy, transactional status; race; agree of intimacy. Saville-Troike (1989: 270) is another scholar who emphasizes the importance of age, sex, role relationships of the participants and the purpose of the encounter. In Turkish culture, there is a strict relationship between the terms used in addressing strangers and the variables of age and sex. By con-

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sidering the influence of age and sex in the choices of speakers while addressing people, it is hypothesized in the study that when Turkish people address a stranger who is older or younger whatever his/her sex is, they tend to use kinship terms like *amca* 'the brother of father', *teyze* 'the sister of mother', *kız* 'daughter', etc.; however, both the addresser and the addressee become equal in their ages, the variable of sex comes into work. In a broader sense, while Turkish people are addressing to someone who is almost at the same age and has the opposite sex, they tend to use more formal expressions like *hanımefendi* 'madam' or *beyefendi* 'sir' or not to use any forms of address which is a sign of formality between the two sides. In accordance with the explained socio-cultural and linguistic factors, the main aim of this study is to investigate what forms of address are frequently used while addressing strangers by Turkish people and why these forms are used.

2. Methodology and data collection

In this study, two fundamental variables have been focused. One of them is age; how the age of the addressee affects the choices of Turkish people is at the core of the analysis. The other variable is sex. How the sex of the addressee affects the choice of the participant, especially when they are at the same age has been focused on, too. The study questions whether the sex of the addressee is influential for the choice of the addresser, especially when they are at the same age.

The data have been gathered from 40 informants, 20 male and 20 female. The ages of the informants are limited between 25–35. All informants are university graduates. Being aware of the fact that the educational backgrounds of the informants may influence the way they address people, they have been selected from the same educational background. All the informants are graduates of faculty of education and they work as teachers for the Ministry of Education in Ankara. They are native speakers of Turkish. The study is an intracultural study. The study does not depend on natural data. A survey is conducted in order to collect the data. The survey questions have been designed in a way to elicit the addressing behavior of the informants to the addressees in different age groups. That is, the informants have been asked how they address to the people who are older, younger and at the same age with them. Five contextual settings have been created; in all of them a person is in a burden and the informants are required to offer help to that person by addressing him. The addressees mentioned in the first two settings are older than the informants; an old man and an old woman. In the third and fourth settings, the addressees are male and female peers. In the last setting, there is a child who is obviously younger than the informants. The study is basically a qualitative study which depends on a limited quantitative data.

3. Data analysis and discussion

3.1. The responses of women/men

The answers of the informants about their addressing choices are given below.

Table 1. Addressing Choices of Informants

	Question 1			Question 2			Question 3			Question 4			Question 5		
	Kinship	Dearment	Beyefendi	Kinship	Dearment	Hanumefendi	Kinship	Dearment	Hanumefendi	Kinship	Dearment	Beyefendi	Kinship	Dearment	Beyefendi/ Hanumefendi
Women	16	-	1	18	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	2	18	-
Men	16	-	-	16	-	-	-	-	6	6	-		7	7	-

As can be observed from the table both women and men preferred to use kinship terms while addressing an older person. Only one female informant preferred formal expressions in addressing the old people, which is rare in Turkish culture. Both female and male informants used formal expressions or not used any addressing terms as addressing to a female peer. One difference between the preferences of women and men is that men may address a male peer by using a kinship term, especially *kardeş* 'brother'. Women do not prefer to address a female peer with a kinship term. No dearment naming is used for any setting. Most informants preferred not to use an addressing term for their peers of opposite sex. Those who have used a form of address have chosen formal expressions of *hanumefendi* and *beyefendi*. All female informants have preferred to address a child by using informal expressions, especially by using a dearment naming. Male informants have used both kinship terms and dearment naming in addressing to a child.

The study has been expressed to understand the addressing preferences of Turkish people, whether Turkish people put a social distance between themselves and others, or in other words, alienate the people that they do not know or internalize them. Therefore, the concept of "the other" appears as the core of this study and needs to be examined.

3.2. Self

Upon considering the notion of "self" and its prominence in understanding the concept of "identity", one should reach the conclusion that "self" can be expressed as the total of all representations which are recognizable by both ourselves and others. Identity is the essence signified through signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles; the choices of individuals and how these choices are perceived by others construct identity. Language use also has an important role in the construction of identity as it is the basic tool for the re-

flection of the inner thoughts, beliefs and attitudes of individuals. How human beings are constituted as subjects through social processes and become as subjects for themselves and the others is achieved by language use. Language and thinking constitute the "I", they bring it into being through the processes of signification. Identity is constituted through the regulating power of discourse (Barker and Galasinski 2001). The study has concluded that in different contexts, a stranger may both become a kin or a stranger when s/he is addressed. Hall (1992: 277) states that "The (social) subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self". Within us there are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about". At this point, addresser's putting himself into different roles and perceiving the addressee in different social roles is reflected in his addressing choices. In the study, some female informants have addressed the old man who is a complete stranger to them by using the kinship term *amca*. On the other hand, they have preferred to address a man at their age by using a formal expression *beyefendi*. That is, these informants accept the old man as a person close to her as if he were a family member but makes the male peer as a stranger, the other. Besides, almost all the female informants address the old man with a kinship term, whereas they have not used a form of address for the male peer. This means, these females form their "self" close to the old man who does not have sexual connotations whereas she is a woman to her male peer. This is same for male informants as well. Some male informants have used a kinship term for the old lady and *hanımefendi* for the peer female. At this point, how an individual addresses another is a point of being an individual, therefore, "self". Both male and female informants have constructed their "selvbies" as close to the old man and lady. The "selves" of the informants are not strangers to the old and the old are not the "others". However, when the situation is shifted in that the informants address their peers, "self" becomes a stranger. "I" is constructed as a stranger to the addressee and the addressee is perceived to be "the other", "she" or "he" is addressed as *hanımefendi* or *beyefendi*. The addresser may think "you are a stranger to my self, you are an other and I am a self who is a stranger to you". Nearly all the informants internalize the child in the question 5. The common term used by addressing a child is a dearment naming, *canım*. It means a piece, even the total part of the heart, therefore a total piece of "self". Addressing a stranger with such an intimate and psychic term reveals the truth that the people who used this term makes the stranger a part of their existence. Such an internalizing is due to that a child is harmless, weak and dependent to an outer "self" who may be the addresser.

3.3. Us

The limits of language mark the edge of human beings' cognitive understanding of the world, for our acculturation in and through language is indicative of our values, meanings and knowledge. To say that two people belong to the same culture are to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on its members' interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and "making sense" of the world, in broadly similar ways (Hall 1997: 2). For

example, the individualism and self-centeredness of western societies is not shared by cultures for whom personhood is inseparable from a network of kinship relations and social obligations (Geertz 1979), as it is in Turkish culture. The preferences of Turkish people while addressing people in different age groups and different sexes may vary in some extent. There is a tendency in Turkish culture to be a part of a big family and kinship; this tendency is a very significant concept in the formation of Turkish society. It affects the attitudes of individuals, by so, it formulates the whole society. The social schemas of people for understanding the world are not simply matters of individual interpretation since they are already a part of the wider cultural repertoire of discursive explanations, resources and maps of meaning available to all members of cultures. As Wittgenstein (1953) proposes, language and meaning are always social in character and there can be no private language. At this point, social relationships in Turkish culture are influenced by the tendency of feeling a part of a big family and it influences the addressing preferences of Turkish people. They prefer to address strangers by using some kinship terms. This can be traced in Levi Strauss's Alliance Theory, kinship terminologies are not being structured in mainly biological, and particularly genealogical, but rather in social ones; "Individuals are not classified into particular kin categories according to their genealogical connections but because of their membership in certain social groupings" (Foley 1997: 147). Addressing an old man by using *amca* 'uncle', an old lady with *teyze* 'aunt' and a small child with *yavru* 'child' is a social phenomenon and does not require to have biological bases. The findings of this study show that Turkish people construct their identities close to the old people and children, and address them with kinship terms although they are not biological members of their families. In other words, Turkish people internalize the old people and children and combine them with "self" and to form "us".

3.4. The other

Studies on the use of addressing terms, and politeness markers help researchers see that certain linguistic choices that a speaker makes indicate the different aspects of the social relationship which he perceives to exist between him/her and the addressee. It is claimed by Rorty (1980) that language does not act as a mirror able to reflect an independent object world, but is better understood as a tool that human beings use to achieve their purposes. Using a kinship term or dearment while addressing to a stranger shows the addresser's intention of bridging between "self" and "us". One of the ways of saving one's face in the strict social order of a society is melting the stranger in the kinship pot. But, there is a precondition for such an action, that is, a belief that the stranger should be harmless to the "self" of the addresser. The term harmless does not mean a physical danger but emerges due to social limitations. In Turkish society, there are limitations caused by social order, traditions and the religion. Some informants have emphasized that they put distance while talking to the opposite sex. If the person in the opposite sex is quite older than the addresser, such a distance is found unnecessary. Nearly all the informants have addressed the old man and the woman by using kinship terms whereas most of these informants who used *amca* and *teyze* for the old have addressed their peer in a formal way, by using *hanımefendi* and *beyefendi* or by avoiding to use any forms of address.

One of the peculiar findings of this study is that female informants do not prefer to address their female peers by using kinship terms. They prefer using formal forms of address. Yet, six male informants have addressed their male peers by using the word *kardeş*, which is a kinship term. This reveals that women are in a tendency to make the peers the *other than* Turkish males that may be due to the social limitations that they experience in the society. Men also alienate the female peers. This can be caused by the intention of putting distance between the “self” and the “other” and avoiding to disturb the addressee.

4. Conclusion

The study shows that the forms of address used by Turkish people for a stranger change according to different social context. However, according to the findings of the study, age and sex seem to be the most distinctive variables for the addressing choices of Turkish people. It is also found that Turkish people address the old people and the children who are strangers by using a kinship term or a dearment naming which is an evidence for internalization. They use formal expressions or do not use any address forms for their peers, especially peers of opposite sex which can be labeled to be a kind of alienation. As a conclusion remark, the study shows that what makes the others *the other* is the idea of being *us*; who cannot be a part of mutual internalization becomes alienated.

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