

ADDRESS TERMS IN ENGLISH

by

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英語における「よびかけ語」

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1. Introduction

In reading dramas and novels written in English, we encounter numerous terms which a speaker of English uses to address people. Not only the number of terms used is great but the kinds of terms are varied. Grammatically these address terms are peripheral, being classified as belonging to minor sentences,⁽¹⁾ but semantically they are important since they reflect the relationship between the speaker and the spoken-to. We may classify terms into several groups according to their meanings: first, personal names, first or last, or both, with or without titles may be used; second, kinship terms may be used with or without first names; thirdly, terms which designate status or occupation may be used with or without last names; fourthly, terms of endearment may be used; and lastly, miscellaneous terms which in some way or other specify the type of person addressed may be used.

Brown and Ford state in 'Address in American English' that 'the principal option of address in American English is the choice between use of the first name and use of a title with the last name,' excluding kinship terms of address 'since most dyads that might be created in America would not call for any sort of kinship term.'⁽²⁾ According to them there are three major patterns of address: the reciprocal exchange of first name, the reciprocal exchange of title with last name, and the nonreciprocal pattern in which one person uses first name and the other title with last name. The choice between the first two reciprocal patterns depends on the degree of acquaintance; nonreciprocal use is generated from the two kinds of relation, a difference of age and a difference of occupational status. They note that if age and occupation are in conflict, occupation would prevail over age in the determination of deference, which is to be expected in a society whose values are more strongly linked to achieved personal attributes than to ascribed attributes. In addition to these three major patterns the use of titles alone is the same as that of title plus last name, and last name alone is a substitute for first name

or it represents simply a degree of intimacy greater than title plus last name but less than first name. The general statement they made is: if an address pattern changes in time it will change in the direction of "mutual title plus last name"→"non-reciprocal title plus last name and first name"→"mutual first name" though a step may be skipped, and the superior is always the pacesetter initiating new moves in this direction.

Schneider and Homans, on the other hand, point out in 'Kinship Terminology and the American Kinship System' that 'the fundamental characteristic of the American system of terms for kinsmen is the presence of a wide variety of alternate terms'⁽³⁾ and that the various alternate terms are alternates in their *role* or *relationship*-designating aspect—aspect meaning the pattern of behavior or relationship that the term symbolizes, rather than in their *ordering* or *classifying* aspect.

With these two studies in mind I would like to discuss usages of address terms in the present-day English. The texts which are used for this paper consist of ten plays and seven novels, and they are limited in number and scope. More exhaustive studies must be carried in the future in order to complete the discussion.

2. The use of first names

The reciprocal use of first names as address terms is normal between husband and wife, between lovers, between siblings, between friends, between colleagues and some of the acquaintances. Joe and Kate Keller in *All My Sons*, Jim and Isobel Cherry in *Flowering Cherry*, John and Nettie Clearly in *The Subject Was Roses*, William and Linda Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, Frank and Hilda Torrance in *Columbo # 3*, who are all husbands and wives, address each other as "Kate" and "Joe," "Bel (33-the number of times the form is used)" or "Isobel (9)" and "Jim(9)," "Nettie(3)" or "Antoinette(1)" and "John(4)," "Linda(16)" and "Willy(46)," and "Hilda (4)" or "Hildy (2)" and "Frank (6)," respectively.

Oliver Barret IV and Jennifer Cavilleri in *Love Story*, who get married soon after they become acquainted at college, do not change the way of addressing each other; Oliver is addressed as "Oliver(44)," "Ollie(14)" and "Ol (5)," and Jennifer as "Jenny (24)," "Jen (21)" and "Jennifer (4)." Chris Keller and Ann Deever, in *All My Sons*, who wish to marry, address each other as "Ann (10)" or "Annie (8)" and "Chris (13)." In *Columbo # 2* President Torrance of Meredith College and Linda Kittridge, a student who has an affair with him, address each other as "Linda(11)" and "Frank (16)" as long as they love each other notwithstanding the great difference in status and age.

Thus between husband and wife and between lovers the reciprocal use of first names is the rule, that is, regardless of marital status man and woman with affection specify each other by the use of first names, and it is terms of endearment that may be substituted for the first names. Between Jim and Isobel Cherry

“darling (5),” “dear (3)” for Jim, and “dear (10),” “my dear (1),” “darling (4)” for Isobel are used; between William and Linda Loman “Dear (27),” “darling (3)” for William, and “sweetheart (3)” “kid (4),” “baby (1)” for Linda are used.

Oliver and Jennifer in *Love Story* do not employ so-called terms of endearment in addressing each other, but then they have three alternate forms of first names to be called by, and in addition they use some other special terms of derogatory sense such as “preppie,” “bitch,” and “bastard.” It seems that the use of too familiar terms like “dear” or “darling” is intentionally avoided by the graduates with honor from Harvard and Radcliffe.

On the other hand, when a full name is employed in address, as in *Columbo # 2* in which Frank’s wife Hilda says, “I know you *very* well, Frank Torrance! Something’s bothering you..,” she expresses a suspicion of his being involved in the murder of Dean Borchardt and acts as an accuser rather than as a wife.

Judy and her brother Tom in *Flowering Cherry*, William and his brother Ben, and William’s two sons Biff and Happy in *Death of a Salesman* address each other as “Tom (4)” and “Judy (8)” or “Jude (2),” “Ben (38)” and “William (16)” or “Willy (1),” and “Hap (9)” or “Happy (2)” and “Biff (31).” Also Blanche and her sister Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* mostly address by first names.

Here it may be pointed out that although first names are used reciprocally between those couples the forms are different depending on the addressees; Jim, John, Willy, Frank, and Chris are for men, and Bel or Isobel, Nettie or Antoinette, Linda, Hilda or Hildy and Ann or Annie are for women. More alternate forms are used for women than for men, and also between siblings more alternate forms are used for younger or female siblings than for elder or male siblings.

In *Columbo # 2* Frank Torrance, President of Meredith College, and Sherman Markham, Dean of the law school, address each other as “Sherm” or “Sherman” and “Frank”; Frank Torrance and Arnold Borchardt, the dean of students, also address each other as “Arnold” and “Frank”. The change from “Arnold” into “Dear, dear Dean Borchardt” occurs when they argue upon the rejection of Borchardt’s plan by the Foundation due to Frank’s sabotage and Frank pronounces that he is the one in charge of cash flow of the college. Between friends the reciprocal use of first names is normal: Judy and her friend Carol, and Tom, Judy’s brother, and Carol call each other by first names; Benjamin and Elaine in *The Graduate* call each other as “Elaine” and “Ben” or “Benjamin” throughout when they have a date, they have a quarrel, and finally they run out of the church from her wedding ceremony. The intimate tone of address by the young people is shown in the conversation between Carl Smith, Elaine’s date, and Benjamin who follows her and meets Carl:

Elaine stepped aside. “This is Benjamin Braddock,” she said. “He rode here with me on the bus. Carl Smith.”

“Ben?” Carl said, holding out his hand.

"It's good to meet you, Carl," Benjamin said, stepping forward to shake it.
(p. 107)

The reciprocal use of first names between male colleagues and friends may be substituted by the use of last names without titles. In *Love Story* Oliver Barrett IV is addressed as "Barrett" besides "Oliver," "Ollie," or "Ol"; Jackie Felt is called "Felt" besides "Jack" or "Jackie"; Raymond Stratton is called "Stratton" besides "Ray" or "Raymond" among themselves. Among these boys and between brothers terms of endearment are never employed in address; instead "kid" and "boy" are used fairly often.

First names are employed for the child by his parent, for the junior by the senior in age and for the inferior by the superior in status, and the use of first names is not reciprocated. In *Death of a Salesman* Linda addresses her son Biff as "Biff (19)," "(my) dear (8)," "darling (4)," "you (1)" and "you louse (1)," and Willy, his father, addresses him as "Biff (28)," Biff (2)," "(my) boy (3)," pal (1)," "kid (1)," "you rotten little louse (1)," and "you vengeful spiteful mut (1)." In *Love Story* Barrett III addresses his son as "Oliver (9)" and "son (9)." In *Flowering Cherry* Isobel addresses her son Tom as "Tom (32)," "Thomas Cherry (1)," "sonny (1)," "dear (1)," "darling (1)," "you ass (1)," and her daughter Judy as "Judy (16)," "dear (3)," and "darling (3)," while Mr. Cherry addresses Tom as "Tom (10)," "Thomas (1)," "boy (2)," "son (1)," "lad (1)," "man (1)," and "old man(1)." Thus when the father or mother addresses his or her child, he or she uses the first name most often, and for a substitute for the first name he or she uses one of terms of endearment, kinship terms or general terms. When the child is addressed by his full name, he is usually being reproached or reasoned, as in,

Isobel: My goodness, you *are* conceited. I'll be glad to see the back of you.

Tom: (grunts, returns to his book but can't, and looks up) : Why?

Isobel: To bring you to your present state of perfection, Thomas Cherry, has taken nineteen years of my life.

Tom: So?

Isobel: So I'll be glad to see the back of you. (p. 2)

Mr. Addams in *Member of the Wedding* addresses Janice, his son's fiancée, as "Janice," Mr. and Mrs. Cherry in *Flowerjng Cherry* address Carol, their daughter's friend, as "Carol," and Mr. Jencks, a senior graduate from the same collge, addresses Oliver by his first name. In return they are all addressed by the title plus last name—Mr. Addams, Mr. Cherry and Mr. Jencks. Except Mr. Jencks all are one generation senior to those addressed. Oliver is addressed as "Oliver" by his employer, and he addresses him as "Mr. Jonas," and Linda, a pre-med student, in *Columbo #2*, is addressed as "Linda" by Dean Borchardt who is in charge of the play in which Linda acts as a heroine, and she addresses him as "Dean Borchardt."

There is one particular case in which an intimate relation between man and woman does not lead them to reciprocate addressing by the first name. Benjamin in *The Graduate* has an affair with Mrs. Robinson, his father's partner's wife, soon after graduating from college, but he never calls her other than as "Mrs. Robinson." Philip in *Of Human Bondage* has an affair with Miss Wilkinson, a daughter of his uncle's friend and rather old spinster, and,

She had asked him to call her Emily, but, he knew not why he could not; he always thought of her as Miss Wilkinson. Since she chid him for so addressing her, he avoided using her name at all. During his childhood he had often heard a sister of Aunt Louisa, the widow of a naval officer, spoken of as Aunt Emily. It made him uncomfortable to call Miss Wilkinson by that name, nor could he think of any that would have suited her better. She had begun as Miss Wilkinson, and it seemed inseparable from his impression of her. (p.222)

Neither Mrs. Robinson nor Miss Wilkinson has the image for the young men to address by the first name, and both love affairs come to an end when the time comes without much trouble.

3. The use of kinship terms

Kinship terms can be used as address terms, but they are mostly nonreciprocal terms which are limited in usage. As Schneider and Homans point out, the terms used in addressing the father and mother are varied, and more than one term may be used by one person. Among kinship terms they are the most in number and the highest in frequency. Tom in *Flowering Cherry* addresses his father as "Dad (6)" and "Daddy (6)," and his mother as "Mum (7)" and "Mother (6)"; his sister Judy addresses them as "Father (1)," "Mother (10)," and "Mummy (3)." Chris in *All My Sons* addresses his father as "Dad (18)" only, but addresses his mother as "Mother (16)" and "Mom (4)." He uses "Mom" until he starts to reproach her for not admitting him and Ann to get married. In her memory Larry, her elder son engaged to Ann, who is missing, always addresses her as "Mom." Thus the term "mother" is used by the son when arguing with the mother as an alternate term for other less formal "mum," or "mom". It is Oliver in *Love Story* that always addresses his father as "Father" or "sir." "Father," which is the most formal way of addressing one's father, is the only term he could choose while rebelling his father, along with his general formality in addressing the senior.

There are some exceptional cases in which the child addresses his parent by the first name. Jennifer in *Love Story* addresses her father Philip as "Phil." This abnormal usage causes Oliver a suspicion that she might have a boyfriend other than him, and when he overhears her saying on the phone, "I love you, Phil," he cannot help asking "Who's Phil?" And when meeting her father he is asked

to call him by his first name instead of "Mr. Cavilleri," he repeats, "Phil, sir," mixing the levels of formality until at last he comes to get used to it. This may be considered as the outcome of the excessive affection between the father and his daughter. On the other hand, Biff in *Death of a Salesman* addresses his father, Willy, as "Dad (27)" and "Pop (35)," but when he tries to make him understand what kind of man he is, he addresses him as "Willy," which may be taken as an indication of his facing his father not as his son, but as a man as weak-hearted as his father who intends to commit suicide.

The usage of kinship terms for father and mother can be extended to address the parent-in-law—the terms may be used for one's husband's or wife's parent. Mrs. Holroyd in *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* addresses her husband's mother as "mother"; Margarette and Mae in *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* address their husbands' mother as "Mama" or "Big Mama." On the other hand, Chris's girlfriend calls his parents by their first names, and her way of addressing them would not change even if she should marry him and become their daughter-in-law since the use of first name would be more person-to-person type of addressing which the general system of address in English is directed to.

As stated above the address terms used by the parent for his son and daughter are first names and terms of endearment. But occasionally kinship terms are in use for sons. Mr. and Mrs. Cherry address their son Tom as "son" and "sonny." Nettie in *The Subject Was Roses* calls her son Timmy, "son." It is Oliver's father in *Love Story* who addresses his son as "son" as often as "Oliver." Each time he meets Oliver, he asks him, "How've you been, son?" and "Anything I can do, son?", which indicates that he expresses his acknowledgment of his role as the father by using the role designating term "son." And Oliver's way of addressing his father as "father" and "sir" all the time shows his trying to keep away from his father.

"Daughter," although this is the counterpart of "son" is not found in the limited material used here, and Suzuki also reports that he could not find it.⁽⁴⁾ We may say that the lack of the kinship term for daughter is well supplemented by the use of more alternate forms of first name and more frequent use of the terms of endearment for the female. "Son," on the other hand, is extended in its use beyond the family: it is used fairly often to address the younger by male adults. In *Columbo #4* Lieutenant Columbo addresses Roy Springer, a cadet whom the cause of an accident is charged to, but whom Columbo believes to be innocent, as "son" and "Roy." In *Twelve Angry Men* the fifth jury is addressed as "sonny" by the seventh and the tenth, in the jury-room where no personal names are accessible.

"Brother" and "sister" in English do not specify the elderliness but only the sex. As mentioned already, address terms used most frequently among brothers and sisters are first names, and the use of "brother" or "sister" by itself is not so often. In *Columbo #3* Adrain addresses his younger half-brother Ric as "brother," and Biff addresses Happy, his younger brother, as "brother," and the term is used

for the younger brother in both cases. Gooper in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* once addresses his younger brother Brick as "little brother," emphasizing his being the first-born son of the family. "Sister" is not used in address by itself but with some modifying terms or first names: Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is addressed as "my baby sister" by her elder sister Blanche, who in turn is addressed as "Sister Blanche," by Stanley, Stella's husband, with ironic tone when giving her a bus ticket to return to Laurel. A rather idiosyncratic use is seen in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, where Brick and his wife call his brother and his wife "Brother Man" and "Sister Woman" as the alternate terms for their first names.

Outside the nuclear family, the uncle, aunt, grandfather and grandmother have the kinship terms used as address terms. Philip in *Of Human Bondage* is reared by his uncle and aunt after his mother's death and he addresses them as "Uncle William" and "Aunt Louisa"—kinship term plus first name. In *The Member of the Wedding* John Henry addresses Mr. Addams as "Uncle Royal," and Jarvis and his sister Frances address Mrs. West as "Aunt Pet." This is employed by Jarvis's fiancée Janice and leads her to ask Mrs. West, "Look, Aunt Pet. May I call you Aunt Pet?" The term "uncle" may be used for someone other than one's kinsman. In *Of Human Bondage* the children of the Athelnies address Philip as "Uncle Philip" while Mr. and Mrs. Athelny address him as "Mr. Carey," and the eldest daughter, Sally, never uses "Uncle Philip" but addresses him as "Mr. Philip," suggesting that she regards him as a person whom she might marry rather than as a person who should be called by the kinship term.

Because of the limited material the use of kinship term alone or first name alone for uncle and aunt has not been found; nor the use of kinship term alone for grandfather and grandmother has been found although Schneider and Homans say that the grandfather and grandmother are the only classes of kinsmen for whom first names are not employed as alternate terms.⁽⁵⁾

We may say that the kinship terms used in address are rather limited: the most frequently used terms are those for father and mother, with a number of alternate forms available, and terms for the other kinsmen are far less frequently used. Those for son, daughter, brother and sister are more likely to be replaced by first names or terms of endearment, but "son" and "brother" are also used for non-family members instead of personal names. The terms for uncle and aunt are used with first names most of the times. However, Schneider and Homans report that "uncle" and "aunt" are likely to be dropped and only first names are used when the speaker has strong affect, positive or negative, toward his uncle and aunt.⁽⁶⁾

4. The use of title plus last name and status terms

In *Columbo #4* Colonel Rumford and his secretary Miss Brady address each other by the title plus last name or by the status term with or without last name,

and again the president of college and his secretary call each other "Miss Purdon" or "Purdy" and "President Torrance." Between these secretaries and Lieutenant Columbo the use of the title plus last name or the status term with or without last name is usual. Also, Columbo never discards addressing his suspects as "Mr. Torrance," "Mr. Carsini," "Colonel," and "sir," while the suspects address him as "Columbo" without any title, "Lieutenant" and "Lieutenant Columbo." To even a pre-med student, he addresses as "Miss Kittridge," although he uses "Roy," "son," "kid," or "Springer" for Roy Springer, a cadet of the military academy, whom he believes to be innocent.

When a change in address terms occurs there also occurs a change in the relation between the two persons. Mr. Carsini of the Carsini Wineries in *Columbo* #3 has been addressed as "Mr. Carsini" for twelve years by Miss Fielding, his secretary, whom he addresses as "Miss Fielding" or "Karen." Just before the case is closed when Carsini supposes that he will not be found to be guilty, he goes out with her for dinner offered by Columbo, and says to her, implying he will marry her,

"It's very strange," he said. "Here we are going out on what for lack of a better word one would have to call a date, and you still refer to me as "Mr. Carsini."....."I think, for tonight," he told with a flash of unaccustomed familiarity, "that we can suspend the formalities. You may call me Adrian." He said it almost coyly. (p. 144)

At the end of the story he is caught disposing the spoiled wine by Columbo and realizes that he has lost; it is then that for the first time Columbo addresses him as "Adrian." Offering him a final glass of wine, Columbo thanks for his comment on his selecting the right kind of wine for him more as a man who has been taught than as a detective.

We may consider that the formality of Mr., Mrs., and Miss plus last name is the same as that of sir, ma'am, and status or profession terms such as Colonel, Lieutenant, Doctor, Sergeant, Captain, and Matron, and they are used interchangeably in the texts. The use of first name instead of last name after the title is also found : "Mr. Ric" for Mr. Carsini's half-brother is used by the employees in the Carsini Wineries, though only to refer and not address directly, to distinguish him from Mr. Adrian Carsini ; "Miss Annie" is used for Miss Sullivan by Mrs. Keller in *The Miracle Worker* while "Miss Sullivan" is used by her husband. "Miss Annie" used by a female speaker, and "Mr. Ric" used for the younger brother of the employer suggest that both speaker and spoken-to must be taken into consideration in the use of address terms.

5. The use of terms of endearment

The terms of endearment, some of which have been mentioned above in

connection with the use of personal names and kinship terms, include saccharine terms such as "honey," "sugar," and "sweet," affection terms such as "love," "beloved," and "lover," and animal and vegetable terms such as "kitten" and "pumpkin."⁽⁷⁾ Those which are employed most often are "dear," "darling" and "honey." They are used reciprocally between man and woman, and between husband and wife in the same way as the first name. From the parent to the child, and especially from the mother to the child and from the father to the daughter, these terms are used as address terms. For little children, "candy," "sugar," "candy lamb," "lamb," "duck," and "duckie" are used in addition to "dear," "darling," "honey," and "baby" by elder people instead of first names, as for John Henry and Frances in *The Member of the Wedding*. We may say that these terms of endearment and first names are interchangeable in address expressing almost the same kind of affection for the addressed children.

6. The use of miscellaneous terms

Besides those terms of address mentioned so far, there are a lot of terms which indicate the types of persons by rather broad categories, such as "boy," "child," "kid," "lad," "man," "guy," "gentleman," "girl," "gal," "woman" "chap," "champ," "fellow," "scout," "sport," "mate," and so on. These terms are used in a wide range to address people who in some way or other belong to the types of persons indicated by them. It must be noted that some of these terms are used in addressing those who may be addressed by kinship terms or first names or last names. That is to say just anyone may be addressed by these terms whether his name is known to the speaker or not so long as he belongs to the type designated by the terms, and the form may be changed into plural if the addressees are more than one.

The use of the term "kid" must be mentioned particularly. It is used to address one's son, wife, son's love, daughter's lover, friend's son, brother (both elder and younger), emplyee, and even one's father and uncle. We may take this term as functioning as one of terms of endearment along with "baby," which is used for one's son, daughter, husband and wife, and "boy," which is used exclusively for the male, usually for the younger brother, son and nephew. They seem to make up the lack of the terms of endearment employed by the male for male—"dear" or "darling" scarcely appears as used by the male for the male.

Another group of terms used in address are those which have derogatory sense in some way. "Bastard," "slugger," "satan," "fool," "butch," "devil", "son of bitch," "lankie," "cripple" and almost any words can be used in addressing if the word expresses what the speaker thinks the addressee is. The personal pronoun "you" which is not used with first names or terms of endearment is often used with this group of words as in "you snotty Radcliffe bitch," or "you bastard."

7. Conclusion

In this paper various terms of address used in the present-day English have been presented, and their usages have been discussed. One of the characteristics of address in English is the frequent use of address terms; it seems that the speaker is always trying to get the hearer's attention or setting up his relation toward him addressing him by personal names, by kinship terms, by terms of endearment and some other terms of status or occupation. Even when the hearer's name is not known, the speaker seems to be trying to use address terms in conversing. This may be partly due to the reciprocal nature which prevails in most of the structures of English. To clarify the system of address terms, a study of terms of reference must be made, and then we will be able to proceed to the study of the relation of language and society.

Notes

- (1) Nida, p. 168
- (2) Brown and Ford, p. 234
- (3) Schneider and Homans, p. 1195
- (4) Suzuki (1970), p. 167
- (5) Schneider and Homans, p. 1200
- (6) *Ibid.*, p. 1200
- (7) *Ibid.*, p. 1202

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