

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter has three aims. First it defines some key terms in this study: personal address terms and reference terms. Second, it gives an outline of the study, stating the objectives, the thesis of the study and provides a rationale for the thesis by discussing the factors that govern address and reference behaviour and the justification for the study. Third, it outlines the scope and organisation of the study.

1.2 Terminology

This first section introduces the two terms used frequently in this thesis: personal address terms and reference terms. It is crucial to define these at the start for two reasons. First, existing research has either focussed on forms of address only (e.g. Brown and Gilman 1960, Mehrotra 1981, Fasold 1990, Fitch 1991, Oyetade 1995, Dickey 1996 and Mashiri 1999), or attempted to look at forms of address and reference terms together (e.g. Das 1968, Murphy 1988, and Carl 2000), but without clearly explaining their relationship. Yet, as Dickey (1997: 257) rightly observes, “a pragmatic study of the actual relationship between the forms of address and forms of reference is necessary.” Second, there is need to clarify, using naturally occurring data, the distinction between the terms’ lexical and social meaning which has vexed sociolinguists for some time (e.g. Zwicky 1974, Bean 1978, Braun 1988, and Dickey 1996).

1.2.1 Personal address terms

Personal address terms have been widely defined from different points of view. Here we provide only a few definitions that assist to identify them, especially with regards to their relationship with reference terms, referred to above. According to Oyetade (1995: 515) address forms are, “words or expressions used to designate the person being talked to while talk is in progress.” Carl (2000: 12) defines address terms as “a communicative activity in which speakers address or refer to each other.” Fitch’s (1991: 255) says, “Personal address terms are a ubiquitous feature that reflects a universal communicative activity: speakers addressing and referring to each other.”

First, it is clear that Oyetade’s use of the phrase, ‘... the person being talked to...’ alludes to his sensitivity to the need to distinguish the occurrence of an addressing and referring activity. Nevertheless, the problem remains unsolved, since in some societies, Shona included, speakers may use children and dogs as pseudo-addressees while the target of the message is a co-present referent. Carl and Fitch’s definitions, contrary to Oyetade’s give the impression that address terms and reference terms are synonymous. Carl and Fitch’s use of the word ‘activity’ alludes to the goal-oriented nature of address systems, quite central to this study. There is implicit reference to the significance of considering the speaker’s characteristics as a determinant factor in the address process. As Braun (1988: 29) notes, “interpreting instances of address solely in terms of addressee characteristics and speaker-addressee relationship, more often than not is insufficient. For many speaker characteristics affecting the choice of address variants are not relational.”

Finally, the word ‘universal’, that Fitch uses in her definition implies that personal address terms exist in all cultures and languages. This means that every socio-cultural system has a functional slot for this kind of activity. However, the factors bearing on the particular form to be selected for this purpose may vary considerably from one culture to another (Coulmas 1979: 245). Thus, Fitch (1998: 34) also stresses the connection between the address system and culture, which forms the basis of this thesis:

The personal address resource that exist, and the patterns and meanings of their uses, are culture specific: they reflect communal understandings of the personhood that are important enough to draw attention in a particular social structure.

This thesis corroborates this view and illustrates how some observations made by studies on European address systems, such as Brown and Gilman’s (1960) and Brown and Ford (1961) (American), or even on those few on other African languages, such as Oyetade (1995), for example, may not be valid for Shona. In spite of some of the shortcomings identified in Oyetade’s, Carl and Fitch’s definitions, taken together, provide an adequate picture of the basic function of terms of address.

1.2.2 Personal reference terms

Personal reference has not been as well investigated as addressing has, although the contributions by Das (1968), Murphy (1988), Carl (2000) and Dickey (1996, 2002) are duly recognised. However, none of these is on an African language. In African languages, the sociolinguistics of personal reference is just as scarce as that of terms of address. Commenting on the state of research on address systems in non-European

languages, Fasold (1990: 30) says, “indigenous languages of the Western hemisphere and African languages have received much less attention.” The present effort therefore intends to provide a springboard for a consolidated study of personal address and reference in African languages and cultures.

Murphy (1988: 318) says of reference terms, “personal reference differs from address in that the person named is not being spoken to”. Carl (2000: 13) notes that, “While personal address terms are terms that are used to address others who are co-present in an interaction, person reference terms may be used to refer to a person or group of people who may or may not be co-present.” Both Murphy and Carl define personal reference terms in relation to personal address terms. This is necessary, since we have already suggested the necessity to study them together or simultaneously with an intention to contribute to the clearing of the misunderstanding surrounding these speech acts¹. Of the two definitions, apparently the only ones we came across in all the literature consulted, we adopt Carl’s. Besides noting that the referent may be one or more people, Carl appreciates the fact that the referent may or may not be co-present. This definition therefore, caters for instances of pseudo-addressees, raised above.

If we take Keevallik’s (1999: 125) view that “address forms are a sensitive means of expressing social relations between interlocutors” as valid, then it follows that personal reference terms, thus provide a safe context or buffer for reducing the risk involved. The implication is that personal reference terms may be taken as an indirect form of address that speakers choose to “speak the unspeakable” (Obeng 2000 and

¹ In this study it will be clear that indirect communication strategies speakers use to avoid confrontation with co-present referents fall under Searle’s (1969) speech-act theory – performing a primary illocutionary act by way of a secondary illocutionary act.

Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom 2002). Hence, both Murphy's and Carl's definitions show that the referent (s), whether s/he [they] is [are] co-present or not, is [are] not a ratified addressee (s). This hypothesis may mean that terms of address and terms of reference are governed by different conditions or rules, contrary to Zwicky's (1974: 788-89) suggestion that:

In general, the conditions on the use of an NP as a vocative [i.e., an address term] to someone are the same as the conditions on its use to refer to someone; if it is appropriate to speak to someone as Grandma Myshkin... then it is appropriate to speak of someone as Grandma Myshkin... other things being equal.

Zwicky's hypothesis also has a bearing on the relationship of lexical/denotative and social/indexial meaning that we shall discuss later in this chapter.

1.3 Categorisation of address and reference terms

Theoretical linguists often classify address [and reference] terms into syntactically 'bound' and 'free' forms² (Braun 1988: 11-12, Dickey 2002: 5). Bound forms are those integrated into the syntax of a sentence, and free are those not so integrated (Dickey 1996: 5). Thus, in the request: *Ambuya tingagarisane here?* 'Mother-in-law, could you please move over' [to create space on a bus seat], *ambuya* is a free form and *ti-* 'inclusive pronoun (we)', a bound form.

² The use of the terms 'bound' and 'free' makes implicit reference to morphemes. The implication of this reference is that we regard words used as address or reference terms as morphological items. Yule (1985: 60) defines 'free' morphemes as words "which can stand by themselves as single words" and 'bound' morphemes as "those which cannot normally stand alone, but which are typically attached to another form." The morphological form of address or reference terms has no direct relevance to their pragmatic function.

In Shona, as in most African languages, free forms tend to be pronouns and nouns and bound forms are usually affixes and they tend to be anaphoric. This syntactic classification of address [and reference] terms is, however, only useful for identification purposes, since it has very little, if any, effect on their sociolinguistic function explored in this study. It is important to mention that nouns are generally divided into common nouns, proper nouns or names and kinship terms. The details concerning their definitions and variations are given in Chapters four through nine.

1.4 Outline of the study

Personal address and reference terms are taken-for-granted sociolinguistic resources that reflect a universal communicative activity, but are structured by ‘cultural codes’ (Philipsen 2002: 52) that are in turn, assumed to vary across cultures. Hence, this study adopts Philipsen’s (1989a) axiom of cultural particularity whose central claim is that efficacious resources for creating shared meaning and motivating coordinating action vary across cultures. Our interest in Shona address and reference terms was prompted by their pervasiveness in everyday language, connection to relationships and communication, and their link to context based cultural meaning.

1.4.1 *Objectives and thesis*

This thesis seeks to answer the following questions: What is the range and what are the patterns of address and reference terms that Shona speakers use for performing their interactions in varied relationships and situations? How does a speaker choose an address or reference term appropriate for a particular situation? How do relational partners use terms of address or reference in particular encounters? What social meanings derive from the use of certain address or reference terms in particular

address or reference performances? These questions can be rephrased in the form of objectives:

- (1) To describe the words or phrases that Shona speakers use as address and reference resources in different relationships and circumstances and the patterns that they take.
- (2) To analyse the micro- and macro-level factors that govern speakers' choice and use of appropriate address or reference terms in particular relationships and situations.
- (3) To describe the way relational partners use address or reference terms in particular circumstances and the outcome of the address or reference behaviour.
- (4) To examine the social meanings deriving from the use of address or reference terms to particular addressees and in specific situations.

The thesis emanating from these objectives is that Shona has a class of address or reference terms that speakers use to perform interpersonal functions. Although personal address and reference behaviour has an obvious referential function, that is, it “points” to one person or another, it simultaneously performs social functions as well. It is these social functions that are our concern. We claim that the personal address and reference resources that Shona speakers use in interpersonal relationships or interactions, and the patterns and meanings of their use, are shaped by both the definite traits of the participants’ actions and the “broader situational and sociocultural context, which make up the background knowledge of the participants” (Winford 2003: 117). The broader situational and sociocultural context embraces the community norms for the types of interaction, and the types of values attached to

different language choices. This approach attempts to provide a multi-dimensional interpretive model that seeks to effectively describe how people relate to one another in an African [Shona] urban context, and perhaps in other societies as well.

This approach however, differs from the germinal Brown and Gilman (1960) model that suggested: “all expressions of social meaning can be mapped into two-dimensional space with the vertical axis being power and the horizontal axis being solidarity” (Winchitz 2001: 339). In other words, Brown and Gilman’s theory assumed that there exist two semantic dimensions of social meaning that are universal to all languages and along which all expressions of social meaning can be located in semantic space. While we acknowledge the validity of this theory, we suggest that dimensions of power and solidarity alone cannot explain adequately complex relational communicative patterns occurring in Shona society.

Several other theorists have challenged the adequacy of Brown and Gilman’s model (Fitch 1991, 1998, Burgoon and Hale 1984, Danziger 1976, Friedrich 1972, Mehrabia 1971). These studies that point to the inadequacy of two universal semantic dimensions of social meaning “provide either no explicit theoretical challenge based on data provided, or they provide an explicit theoretical challenge ... without basing the challenge on data from observed actual interactions between interlocutors” (Winchitz 2001: 339-340).

The present study has also been inspired by Sahlstein and Duck’s (2001) performance approach and also by Fitch’s (1991, 1998) culture-specific approach to the study of terms of address. Sahlstein and Duck’s approach, like Philipsen’s,

attempts to link the micro-level of conversational interaction to the macro-level societal settings to which it occurs, and without which it cannot be interpreted. Fitch also acknowledges the value of integrating these two levels when she says that,

Communication takes place, in other words, in speech communities, which vary in their socially constructed understandings of the nature of persons and desirable relationships between them. Communication practice is shaped and influenced by those understandings, while at the same time cultural meaning is constructed through talk.

We assume that this theoretical position enables us to answer the question: how do interlocutors create and maintain unique identities while still remaining a part of the larger social unit?

1.4.2 *Factors affecting rules of address and reference*

Three hypotheses that we propose about how speakers choose address and reference terms are: (1) The social determinants of reference are essentially those of address, (2) The rules of reference are not the same as those of address and (3) A dialectical tension may occur between interlocutors and culture in the sense that interlocutors may define their autonomy from the larger culture by creating a “mini-culture” (Hopper, Knapp and Scott 1981) of their own. Hypothesis 1 and 2 are competing. This is because at this stage, they are rather schematic – they are only useful for their heuristic value.

Sociolinguists generally agree that address [and reference] usage is governed by rules stating which forms are used in which circumstances (Brown and Ford 1961: 234,

Murphy 1988: 320). Hence, Parkinson (1985: 225) says that, “Knowledge of the proper use of terms of address [and reference] is ... as important to the overall success of communication as knowledge of the conjugation of verbs would be.” Of course Parkinson oversimplifies the significance of choosing the appropriate address terms since there is evidence of severe reprimands that occur in some societies as a consequence of wrong choices, which may never be associated with wrong conjugation of verbs. For example, in 1977 a German woman who addressed a policeman as *du* (familiarity) rather than *Sie* (distance) was fined 2.250 DM for this improper address, and in 1983 a German bus driver was fined 100 DM for saying *du* to a Turkish student (Dickey 1996: 1).

Braun (1988) uses a rhetorical discursive approach, which limits the meaning of discourse acts “within the sequences of interaction” (Carl 2000: 4), to interpret the consequence of the German woman’s wrong choice of an address form. Hence, misreads the event and drifts into didacticism:

...Whether rural or individual this case of deviant behaviour was not met with tolerance, not interpreted as a simple sociolinguistic indicator ... but it may also be due to an individual lack of flexibility on the policeman’s part ...(30).

What Braun fails to appreciate is the power of ‘national’ culture³ to constrain individual speakers’ code choices. He also misses the point that some speakers may deliberately violate a society’s rules of speaking (see Montgomery 1992).

³ ‘National’ culture is used here to imply a culture that is shared by all native speakers of Shona through all forms of socialisation and interaction. Frantz Fanon(1968) uses the term national culture in a different context.

Nevertheless, cultural norms can impose speaking patterns on members of a community and members of that community are socialised to know what is acceptable and unacceptable. Sex-related differences in the use of address and reference terms provide evidence of the influence of culture on verbal behaviour. Mead ((1949: 8) says that, “Every society sets up societal norms for men and for women which go beyond what would be required by the biological differences of the sexes.” Several studies indicate that there are such differences in other cultures. Martin in studying the factors in standard Japanese and Korean which operate to influence a speaker’s choice of reference and address forms found sex differences as one of the four factors (others are age, social position, and outgroupness) which determine the choice. Martin’s conclusion in his study on non-standard dialect Japanese was that, “one’s sex is the most important factor determining one’s honorific usage” (1967: 407, 415).

Mehrotra (1981: 135) and Coulmas (1979: 242-3), like many researchers of address systems, admit that the rules that govern address usage in various cultures are extremely complicated, and it is frequently difficult to predict the factors that influence the choice of address and reference and which ones do not. However, culture has been less regularly featured in most sociolinguistic studies of language variation (Labov 1970). In most sociolinguistic research, says Johnson (2000: 46) social structure predominates as the central organising concept used to explain language variation.

Most studies on systems of address and reference, following Brown and Gilman’s (1960) theory of power and solidarity tend to base descriptions of interlocutors’ identities exclusively on conventional demographic variables such as age, sex, social

class, etc., (Fitch 1991: 257) as the chief determinants of patterns of address [and reference] term use. Sociolinguistics, then, often minimises complex notions of how culture shapes use in favour of more standard notions of societal groupings. Yet, as Forgas (1983: 276) observes,

Situations and language use are not only related to each other at the level of individual cognitive representations. People are constituted as a society with a certain culture to the extent that they share the same means of social communication. Interactions are, therefore, among the most important building blocks of a culture.

Schneider (1976) defines culture as a system of beliefs, symbols and meanings: a collection of conceptual resources that answer global questions of what exists in the world, and why, for a particular group of people. Schneider suggests that discovery of cultural meaning may be accomplished by studying normative uses of cultural symbols in the widest possible array of contexts. From this view, “association of demographic variables such as age, sex, social class, and so forth [though inevitable] with patterns of language use is not a primary analytic move” (Fitch 1991: 258), since the variables are themselves embedded in the world view of the people and their effect on the speakers’ language behaviour can only be understood within the framework of that world view. In the urban setting the overarching cultural systems also include artefacts such as television, magazines, music, videos, magazines, etc. All these can influence the way interlocutors go about addressing or referring to one another.

We assume that Shona culture provides the people the communal knowledge and understandings of aspects of personhood, the nature of acceptable address and reference terms to use in certain relationships and in particular situations and the ability to correctly interpret the social meaning of utterances. This does not mean that the rules of address usage are inviolable; indeed they can be broken to produce powerful effects, but the very fact that their violation is meaningful shows that they exist and that speakers are using them (Muhlhausler and Harre 1990: 161-2, Braun 1988: 49-50). Children are socialised into this communal knowledge or “standardised and culturally sanctioned patterns of behaviour” (Forgas 1983: 276) and they are obliged or rather expected to creatively manipulate linguistic resources in interaction as part of their ‘communicative competence’ (Hymes 1962, 1972, 1986).

Because of shared knowledge, an audience at graduation ceremony at the University of Zimbabwe, for example, would respond favourably to a parent who stands up from the audience and vocatively address her child saying *Zvaitwa Mbizi!* ‘Well done son (of the Zebra totem)’ when her son is called to receive his certificate. Since expectations in such situations are socially defined, the use of the clan praise name in this occasion affords the mother in question a maximum certainty of knowing that the act she performs will be understood by the addressee and the audience in the intended manner. Yet if his girlfriend had done the same thing at the same occasion, the response would probably be different.

By emphasising the role of the ‘national’ culture in governing linguistic behaviour we do not intent to suggest a monolithic definition of Shona urban culture. Shona [urban] culture is a complex system made up of several symbolic systems that generate

meaning. Most people are entailed in multiple relational or mini-cultures, offering multiple bases for identity (Johnson 2000: 53). Wood (1982: 76) defines relational culture as a “privately transacted system of understanding that coordinates attitudes, actions, and identities of participants in a relationship.” Montgomery (1988) concurred: “Relational standards are phenomenologically unique for each partnership. They are developed entirely within the confines of a particular relationship” (354). Both describe the unique symbols, meanings and patterns of interaction that emerge within close relationships but often bearing little resemblance to public language rules (Fitch 1998: 142). Although this is attainable, there is heavy emphasis on relational culture as a dyad-specific, individual system of meaning.

Even with this heavy emphasis on the uniqueness of relational language behaviour, the influence of the social world on private relationships is also acknowledged. First, researchers point out that the impact of relational codes on behaviour extends beyond private interaction. Following Goffman (1971), Bell et al (1987) and Wood (1982) note that intimate idioms that couples use to coordinate action in public allow them to create an identity that shows the link between them, thereby leading observers to make attributions of intimacy. Second, social groups communicate expectations for relational partners that are incorporated into the relational standards each couple or friendship develops, in the way of relational prototypes (Montgomery 1992). Social groups also communicate understandings of what constitute “good” communication within relationships (Montgomery 1988). However, it is obvious that participants do not just follow instructions for being friends, marital partners, colleagues, and so forth, “passed along whole cloth from their social world” (Fitch 1998: 143), but sometimes they adapt, adjust, or substitute alternatives for social expectations in ways

that are unique to their personalities and circumstances (Gottman 1979, Montgomery 1988).

In this study we extend the notion of relational culture or mini-cultures beyond dyadic relationships to include groups following Dundes' (1990) folkloristic definition of a folk group: " Any group of people who share at least one linking factor – be it occupation, religion ..." (1). Dundes suggests that a 'folk' group could consist of a minimum of two people but the maximum is open. Hence, a relational culture may include families, workmates, members of the same religious group, groups of students, and so forth. These groups, like dyads, can also develop their address and reference terms unique to their membership.

In a cross-cultural study of nickname practices in Israeli and Jewish American families, Blum-Kulka and Katriel (1991) conclude that families from both groups develop "familial codes [that] reflect and reinforce ... a shared history, sketching the boundaries of the family as a social unit and enhancing a sense of solidarity among its members" (66). We assume that the data analysed in Chapter six of this study also show similar trends. One other question that we attempt to answer is just how relational partners or groups draw on social cultural resources and how personal relationships construct culture.

The relationship of the speaker and addressee and / or referent is made up of not only the identity of the addressee or referent, but also that of the speaker: age, sex, status, familiarity, kinship, and membership of a group all play a part. Relationships are as many as the possible encounters that take place in a society. In the city of Harare,

workplaces, churches, classrooms, street corners, queues, bus stops, markets, hospitals, restaurants, meetings, parties, path crossings, etc., offer opportunities for encounters between both acquainted and unacquainted individuals or groups of people. In the various interpersonal interactions people either use, shared meanings between them, draw from their communal repertoire or experience from previous interactions, to decide on what address or reference terms to use. Experience is important because, according to Schutz (1960):

Understanding social interaction requires the reconstruction of those interpretative patterns put into practice by communicating subjects in social intercourse in order to understand interactional scenes. Every participant in a social situation brings along his interactional experience, which allows him to identify every concrete situation as a token of a type of situation previously encountered. On the basis of wants, preferences, norms, values, knowledge of human motivations, and interpretative schemes he is able to abstract those features of a situation which it has in common with others (cited in Coulmas 1979: 243).

Although one person's position may sometimes be so unusual that s/he receives the same address from [or is referred to by] all possible speakers (e.g. a Roman Catholic nun, perhaps), it is usually the case that address usage "is not predictable from properties of the addressee alone and not predictable from properties of the speaker alone but only from properties of the dyad (Brown and Ford 1961: 234).

In Shona, as in many other languages and cultures, it is not only acceptable but normal for one person to receive many different addresses from or be referred to by

many different reference terms by many different speakers. For instance, Mashiri (2003a) shows that a bus conductor or tout may be addressed to by his friends and referred to by clients as *hwindi* ‘tout’, addressed by street children as *muvheti* ‘lit. A white man’, and *ngezha* ‘elite’ by his younger brother when asking for pocket money, but referred to by his wife as *baba vaSekai* ‘Sekai’s father,’ when talking to other women in the neighbourhood. We should assume that the data for this thesis would reveal this same.

The importance of social context of the interlocutors’ interaction, characterised by Hymes in many of his writings on the ethnography of speaking, as setting, audience, and topic of discourse, in determining the address or reference usage is less universally recognised by sociolinguists. They tend to stress only the speaker-addressee relationship, “partly because surveys conducted by means of questionnaire and interview often overlook this factor’ (Dickey 1996: 7).

Nevertheless, a number of recent studies have shown that although contextual factors may never be strong enough to out-weigh speaker-addressee [or speaker-addressee-referent] relationship, in determining address or reference usage, in many cases their influence is crucial (Kridalaksana 1974: 19, 20; Friedrich 1966: 229; Howell 1968: 554; Holmes 1992: 297). As Holmes (1992: 297) illustrated, “If he [your brother] is acting as the judge in a law of court then calling him as *Tom* will be considered disrespectful, while at the dinner table calling him *Your Honour* will be perceived as equally rude.” Holmes’s last point about the dinner table address is obviously culture-specific or rather debatable since in some cultures, Shona included, a young or older

brother could easily tease the judge brother that way, sometimes without the addressee feeling offended.

In addition, Holmes, like many researchers on address systems, regards the relationship between address or reference choice and context as one way. Besides context influencing the linguistic behaviour of the interlocutors, the interlocutors, or the speaker, to be precise may creatively use an address or reference term with the intention to change the context of interaction.

Second, Holmes, again like many sociolinguists, omits or trivialises the speaker's intention or goal. The aspect of the speaker's communicative intention or goal is not simply an end in itself, but "a kind of 'emotional capital', which can be invested and manipulated in order to achieve a specific result" (Mehrotra 1981: 121). Mehrotra alludes to the function of address and reference terms. We make two assumptions that derive from this point. The first assumption is that Shona speakers use personal address and reference terms as interactional resources to achieve certain goals.

The second assumption, related to the first is that, use of a particular address term or reference term per se does not have a specific social meaning. It is the selection of that address or reference term, rather than others, which might have been used, which conveys social meaning. From this view, an address or reference term might have one meaning in context A and another meaning in context B. Hence, Fitch (1991: 256) says, "to describe and explain the meanings of an address term system is thus to identify the resources of the system and to discover patterns of intentions and interpretations ascribed to the uses of those resources." If the speaker's intention

(goal) is important for the assessment of social meaning, then, so is the speaker's and the addressee's interpretation of that same meaning. We assume that an understanding of the intentions and interpretations would only be derived from the knowledge of both the conventional, literal uses of address and reference terms and creative, indexical/strategic uses.

Perhaps the most influential single factor in determining the form of address and reference employed is the audience, and at the same time, it is probably the most difficult to adequately describe. It is often difficult to separate the audience from the setting, but when this can be done audience is shown to be a significant influence of address and reference. Fischer (1958: 51) approximates an explanation when he says that, "One would want to know how these ... frequencies of choice of variants changed under different situations and in the presence of conversants of different social status and personal relationship." We therefore, hypothesise that address and reference practices in Shona vary greatly according to whom else is present. In this case, the topic of discourse is also important although its effect on address usage has not been clearly established in some languages.

Lastly, the attitude or the feeling of the speaker towards the addressee or referent and the general emotional level of the discourse are also crucial determinants of address or reference term choice. Whether this is a sociolinguistic rule like the other factors already mentioned and when does this come into play is part of what this study will establish.

These added dimensions are based on Hymes' (1964) analysis of the communicative event in which he identified: (1) senders/speakers, (2) receivers/listeners/audience, (3)

channels, (4) codes, (5) settings, (6) forms, (7) topics as being the components of the speech event. Jonz (1975: 69) says, “It is by the consideration of as many elements as is possible in the analysis of language that one comes close to identifying completely the social context of that language use. Hertzler (1965) (cited in Jonz 1975:70), made the same point a decade earlier, that, “The language system and the metaphysical and sociocultural texture and context of a society, or even a group cannot be separated. Each reflects the other; each is operationally related to the other; each is both cause and effect of the other.”

1.4.3 *literal meaning versus social meaning*

Of concern to researchers of human communication, in particular address and reference terms, for several decades, has been how interlocutors express their understandings of their relationships to one another (Parkinson 1985, Braun 1988, Fitch 1991, Myers-Scotton 1993a, Mashiri (forthcoming), Dickey 1996, 1997b, 2002). These authors, as well as others in a variety of fields, “made the point that in human interaction, every communicative act encodes both a referential meaning and a social meaning” (Winchatz 2001: 338). Parkinson (1985) provides one useful characterization of social meaning, when she says that the social meaning of a communicative act expresses “who the speaker believes he is, who he believes the addressee to be, what he thinks their relation is, and what he thinks he is doing by saying what he is saying” (p. 5).

However, attempts to explain the distinction between literal meaning and social meaning have been full of confusion. Many researchers fail to distinguish the way the word ‘reference’ or ‘referential’ is used as a description of denotative meanings of

words and a communicative performance, as it is used in this study. Hence, Dickey (1996: 9) uses the words ‘lexical’ and ‘reference’ as synonyms, even where she refers to the communicative performance. Dickey appears to have inherited this problem from Braun (1988: 264) who displays uncertainty in the winding statement:

How can the meaning of a word be determined at all? By investigating how it is used, it would seem. But in this case, use of a form of address could be taken to constitute part of the total use of the word hence, to contribute to its meaning. Thus, one arrives at an awkward circle: looking for a meaning of a word used in address, one has to consider its use, which again includes the use of the form of address ...

In her 1997 article, Dickey worsens things when she gives a vague explanation:

The address meaning of a word is determined by its usage as an address and the referential meaning by its usage when referring to people or things (that is, in non-address context) and the lexical meaning includes both these.

The best way out of this problem is, first, to regard any terms that speakers may use as address and reference forms as words that have literal or lexical meanings out of context (sentence or discourse). Hence, Finnegan’s (1994: 158) definition of literal meaning as “object, notion, or state of affairs described by a word ” applies. Once a speaker selects and uses a word to encode social information in an interaction, that is, to address or to refer to a person, the word acquires social or indexical meaning from

the context of use. At this moment the word serves a “pointing” function (Fitch 1991: 255) or what Myers-Scotton (1993a: 118)) calls “marked” function.

This argument does not preclude the fact that a word can still be used literally in some contexts, even as a term of address or reference, while at the same time it is being used indexically in other contexts. For example, children can use the term *baba* ‘father’ to address their father in the family, yet their father’s friend can also use the same term to address the same ‘father’ at the club, but as a [slang] friendship term connoting closeness. The children’s use of the word appears to be obviously literal, contrary to that of their father’s friend that is non-literal. The semantic analysis of such use of the term *baba* in the non-literal sense to signal ‘extended kinship’ (Dickey 2002: 119) “is furnished by the inspection of its context of use” (Coulmas 1979: 241).

Sometimes a word may not be used as an address term in its literal sense, but when it is adopted as a term of address or reference in a particular situation, this social context gives it social meaning. The term *murungu*, for example, ‘lit. White person’ is not normally used as an address term in its literal sense (although it may be used as a reference term, as in *Murungu ari kupi*, ‘Where is the white man?’ in a setting where there is a white man, and both the speaker and the addressee understand that he is the referent). However, in contexts where it is used pragmatically, that is, to refer to or to address a person who does not belong to the white race, but is deemed to resemble a white person in other respects, it can be used both as an address and a reference term. In this context the social meaning of the word when used as a term of address or reference will only make sense if the speaker and the addressee have the same

understanding of its literal meaning or if the context of use makes it abundantly clear (where the addressee may not know the literal meaning) what the speaker implies.

Second, a word may still have its literal meaning in its original form or ‘source language’ (e.g. if its borrowed) but the interlocutors may use it indexically, but only deriving its social meaning from habitual usage. Sometimes if asked what the literal meaning of the word is, they may not even know. Examples of such words are *comrade* and *Gringo* (see Chapter six), yet people use them so often either as address or reference terms in Shona. The Wittgensteinian (1953: 20) ‘theory of use turns out to be fully valid in this case: the meanings of the address and reference terms are conditioned by the behavioural patterns of which they are an integrated part.

In order to avoid the problem encountered by Dickey, Parkinson and Braun, for example, of trying to separate the words ‘lexical’ or ‘literal’ and ‘reference’ or ‘referential’ on the one hand, and using the terms ‘address meaning’ and ‘social meaning’ interchangeably, on the other hand, one can simply talk of literal or lexical meanings of address or reference terms versus their social or indexical meaning. Once we start talking of ‘referential meaning’ and address meaning’ (Dickey 1996, 1997, 2002), then, we lose the indexical significance of addressing and referencing. However, the struggle to link the lexical and the social meaning of terms of address and *reference* has reinforced the significance of social context and shared knowledge between the speaker and the addressee in predicting the meaning and effect of choosing particular address or reference terms. As has been mentioned earlier, literal meanings of address and reference terms are not in themselves important in this study, but meanings deriving from the speaker’s intent, among other things.

1.4.4 *Politeness*⁴

Another area of sociolinguistics, the study of politeness phenomena, is closely related to address and reference studies and has much to contribute to it. In particular, it is useful to know that there are two types of strategies, which can be called ‘politeness’: positive and negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987). ‘Negative politeness’ is employed primarily to seniors, and it consists of efforts to avoid hindering the addressee in any way or annoying him/her by undue familiarity. ‘Positive politeness’ is a strategy in which the speaker tries to gratify the addressee in some way (Brown and Levinson 1987: 101, 129). One of the commoner forms of positive politeness is the use of in-group identity markers such as address forms that remind the address that s/he has a connection with the speaker (Brown and Levinson 1987: 107-9).

1.4.5 *Justification*

The present study is significant in many ways. Although personal address terms have been extensively studied in the fields of sociolinguistics and communication studies, [we have already noted that] very little has been done on African languages. The present effort therefore intends to provide a springboard for similar studies on the African languages. More so, personal reference has not been as well investigated as terms of address have. The literature on reference has focused primarily on strict grammatical rules such as anaphora and/or intrasentential coreferential relations (see Fortune 1980, Dembetembe 1987) leaving out interactional roles. The problem here is

⁴ Whenever we use the word ‘politeness’ it includes the notion of ‘impoliteness’ (see Chapter 3) although impoliteness manifests with violation of the basic rules of politeness.

in explaining how speakers choose a referring expression that will uniquely pick out the referent and in explaining how listeners actually arrive at the correct referent (Murphy 1988: 319).

The problem with the grammatical approach is that although there are grammatical restrictions on coreference of pronouns, they do not determine the correct reference but rather rule out intrasentential coreferential relations (Lasnik 1976 Reinhart 1983). Clearly, the speaker depends on the discourse context to be able to limit the possible referents (Olson 1970), and the addressee is taking this into account when determining the referent (Clark and Murphy 1982). As Murphy (1988: 320) correctly observes, this coordination is possible because the speaker and the addressee share considerable knowledge, which allows them to agree on how to refer to the object (see Chapter four).

Studying them together provides a comprehensive appreciation of the relational management strategies Shona speakers use in an urban context. The contextual factors that determine the choice of terms of address are largely the same ones that determine the choice of personal reference terms. The only difference is in the rules. For instance, when choosing terms of address, the speaker-addressee relation is dominant. In contrast, when choosing a referring expression, the speaker's choice will depend on whether the referent is present and also on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee and also the addressee and the referent, etc.

A study of personal address and reference terms is also desirable in that it offers insights to some grey areas in linguistics such as the gender selective or unsystematic

use of the Shona honorific *va-* (lit. Mr, Sir or Madam, sometimes). The use of Shona personal pronouns also poses problems, especially in second-language teaching. For example, grammatically, Shona singular pronoun is normally used for one person, but plural for one person, two or more. When a plural pronoun is used for one person it is technically referred to as honorific plural and numerical plural, when used for two or more persons. In order to understand the greeting routines, for instance, a second language learner of Shona has to be competent in the sociolinguistic rules, which govern the choice of pronouns. In fact, this study will show how the inclusion of pragmatic factors in the study of pronouns reveals the shortfalls of “universal” rules of grammar pertaining to the use of personal pronouns.

The other justification for this study is that patterns of addressing and referencing provide insight into the dynamics of power, freedom of speaking or of speech (Obeng 2000) and the factors that constrain it, and of role relations in the culture. Hence, personal address and reference devices are relevant social, linguistic, and cultural inventory of parameters, different from other linguistic segments in that they encode speakers’ interpersonal attitudes, and, thus, are emotionally and culturally indicative. As Adler (1978:167) says, “modes of addressing [and referencing] give a clear picture of the society in which the respective languages are spoken.” The study of their use, variation in the use, and changes in their use through time and space offers a valuable means of access to the wider norms and values and the process of social change in the speech community.

This study is also valuable since focusing on the language behaviour of Shona speakers living in Harare offers insights into the complexity, fluidity and

multilingualism of Harare, in particular, and African cities in general. Communal contact zones such as work places, schools, streets, churches, public transport, bars, to mention a few, are a consequent of urbanisation. People who occupy these contact zones develop unique and/or use existing personal and reference terms creatively to communicate with one another and to construct socio-cultural identities. The use of kinship terms to address non-relatives, discussed in Chapter 7, is one example of the creative use of language to achieve pragmatic effects.

The findings of this study will, hopefully, stimulate the desire for a more focussed and thorough study on "Town Shona", initiated by a number of Shona language scholars (see Ngara 1982; Chimhundu 1983; Chikanza 1986; Dembetembe 1999; Mawadza 2000a; Mashiri 2001a, 2003). In addition, in view of the implication of Parkinson's (1985:260) claim that once a word has entered the system of address, its development is less and less affected by its lexical meaning, to historical linguistics, this study will have to provide explicit conclusions to guide historical linguists.

1.5 The scope of the study

The present study aims to remedy the lack of considering the entire Shona address and/or reference system over a period of over a century. However, we have to impose some limitations. The most important such restrictions are on historical period and setting. This study is synchronic, although aspects of address change are referred or alluded to. We limit this research to the urban setting, Harare in particular for two reasons. First, Harare consists of diverse contact zones or situations of human encounters that require management of interpersonal relations with the use of language. Many people belong to multiple and seemingly competitive sub-cultures while at the same time they are interconnected by the mainstream culture through

which they share common understanding of what language behaviour is acceptable/unacceptable and expected in different relationships. Second, a study that includes both the urban and rural setting would be insurmountable. For the purposes of this study Harare refers to any area within the 30 km boundary from the main Post office. The method of choosing subjects is discussed in Chapter three.

Although the use of literary works as the source of address and reference terms has been quite popular over the years (Brown and Ford 1961, Weise 1965, Whalen 1982, Waterhouse 1982, Olson 1992, Dickey 1996 and 2002) we prefer naturally occurring data. This preference is inspired by the richness of communal life in Shona society. A person is a set of bonds to others and hence, friendships, mateships, work relationships, families, networks, and licit and illicit partnerships are pervasively important sites for construction of meaning (Fitch 1998: 13).

The other important restriction to the scope of this study concerns the nature of interactions examined. Shona discourse abounds in prayers⁵ (Mashiri 2000c) and other addresses to deities. Such addresses account for the majority of vocatives. Nevertheless, these religious addresses do not follow the same address system as those between humans; they are often formulaic, sometimes archaic, and frequently use terms that could not be used for humans. In order to avoid distortion of the picture of Shona address and reference usage among humans by including a large corpus of addresses from prayers, it is necessary to exclude consideration of addresses to deities as well. The address usage in prayers (both Christian and non-Christian) is a rich area of sociolinguistic research that a separate study can focus on.

⁵ We take prayers and sermons as monologue and that the rules of address pertaining to these discourses may not be the same as those involving conversations.

In terms of the types of addresses to include, no specific limitation is made other than the one just mentioned. This means that Shona address and reference terms, whether nominal or pronominal, bound or free, are considered here. The only limiting factor is the emphasis on the non-literal use of address and reference terms. Although an attempt is made to cover as much ground as possible, no claim is made for absolute completeness.

The last major restriction on this study concerns the exclusion of dialectal peculiarities or variations. We acknowledge the fact that Harare is the meeting point of Shona people from diverse dialectal backgrounds who use words from their regional varieties naturally. We are following the results of our pilot survey, which revealed that the variety that is generally used in Harare approximates the ‘standard’ form (Chimhundu 1992). Dialect forms are considered only when it is predictable that other forms could have been used, hence that particular choice expresses a social or indexical meaning.

Translations of address and reference usage are always translations of the literal meaning, not a socially equivalent English address and reference (which if it exists, has in most cases a very different lexical meaning). The translations are only a rough guide for non-Shona speakers. We use pseudonyms for interviewees and informants, by agreement with them to protect their identities.

1.6 Organisation

A study of personal address and reference can begin from either of two angles: classification of linguistic forms in terms of how they are used, or according to the macro-sociological/demographic aspects of the addressee or referent. Thus, Dickey (1996: 27) observes:

One can classify the addresses semantically, for example into names, kinship terms, etc., and observe the ways in which these different groups are employed, or one can classify the speakers and addressees on the basis of age, sex, rank, etc., and observe the different addresses used by each group.

Many researchers on terms of address [and reference] prefer to use the linguistic criterion (Chao 1956, Head 1978, Farghal and Shakir 1994, Oyetade 1995, Brown 1996, Malone 1997, Fitch 1998, Winchitz 2001 and Dickey 2002). However, these researchers seldom give reasons for starting from this angle. Dickey (2002: 28) simply states that, "... it is safer to begin from the terms themselves, as is usual in historical sociolinguistics ... and this is also the system which has been used by most of those who have written about Greek addresses [which she focuses on as well]." It appears that Dickey's reason amounts to no reason at all.

We opt for the linguistic criterion for two reasons. First, linguistic forms and not demographic factors are the focus of the study since the former are linguistic universals whose use is culture-specific. The application of demographic factors is however, determined by the cultural milieu of a society. Second, it is the use of a

linguistic form in context that reflects the implied social meaning or projects the attributes of the addressee or referent.

In addition Chapter one, Chapters two and three set the background of the thesis. Chapter two reviews the literature on address and reference usage in general and on Shona specifically, in order to identify gaps in the previous research. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework on which the study is based and it discusses the modifications suggested to the supplementary theory, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model. This chapter also deals with the methodological issues related to this study.

The main body of this thesis is Chapters four through nine and chapter ten is the conclusion. Chapter four analyses data that show interlocutors' use of personal pronouns and other proforms as address and reference terms in varied interactive contexts. In chapter five we discuss use of proper names, including personal names alone and with titles, surnames, with and without titles, full formal names and teknonyms. Chapter five and Chapter six dovetail into one another. While chapter five looks at ordinary naming, six discusses the creative alternatives involving the use of nicknames, clan praise names and descriptive addresses. Chapter seven discusses evidence of the indexical use of kinship terms of address and/or reference in non-kin relations and interactions. Chapter eight analyses data on the use of slang and Chapter nine is on insults or abuse address and reference terms. As part of the conclusion, Chapter ten offers a discussion of address rules and reference rules in Shona and an evaluation of the hypotheses given in Chapter one.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter we defined the area of investigation by explaining the key concepts, “personal address terms” and “personal reference terms,” outlining the study: stating the objectives, thesis and rationale for the thesis, the justification, scope and organisation of the study. We noted the synchronic nature of the study and our focus on naturally occurring data and face-to-face interactions. With regards the objectives of the study, we stressed three things: the rationale of studying personal address and reference terms together, the pragmatic bias of the study and the emphasis on the social meanings of address or reference terms.

Our outline of the research objectives and thesis reflected the significance of alternation or variation in address choice, the link between situational factors (both interpersonal and sociocultural) and address and reference behaviour, the rule oriented and purposive nature of address practices.

Under the scope, we delimited and justified the setting of the study. Besides limiting focus on naturally occurring data, we proposed to limit ourselves to addresses between humans in spite of the presence of a rich repertoire of discourse involving prayers and other addresses to the deities. Dialectal peculiarities are omitted and where considered, are included for their pragmatic import.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Survey of Literature

This chapter explores in some detail the theoretical background under which the current research is done. Due to the paucity of studies on personal address and reference in the Shona language and society, the present study benefits from a more general review of what has been done in the area of addressing and reference before looking specifically into the Shona situation.

2.1.1 *Personal address and reference studies in general*

Personal address and reference terms have been traditionally studied separately. Yet, a pragmatic study of the actual relationship between forms of address and forms of reference is necessary since the form and meaning of a word as an address term cannot be assumed to be the same as a reference term. Hence, Dickey (1997) notes,

We cannot assume that because person A refers to person B with a certain word, A will also use that word in addressing B, nor that because A addresses B in a certain way, A will also refer to B in that way (257).

Detailed justification for studying personal address and reference usage together is given in the preceding chapter of this thesis.

The only comprehensive study on personal reference usage that we are aware of is Murphy's (1988) article on personal reference in English. Murphy explores the social factors that govern how speakers choose a referring expression in a given situation. Murphy conducts five experiments where speakers are given scenarios and asked how they would refer to a particular person in that situation. "The results showed that speakers were sensitive to the level of intimacy between the speaker and the referent, between the addressee and the referent, and between a nonparticipating audience and the referent" (Murphy 1988: 317). The levels of relationships that Murphy presents form the basis for our assessment of situations in which Shona speakers avoid certain references that could be face threatening and the rules that determine their choice of alternative forms.

The study of the choice and use of forms of address is in its fifth decade now since Brown and Gilman published the article "Pronouns of power and solidarity" (1960). The linguistic choices that speakers make in situations and their meanings to those who interpret them are systematic. Such systematicity in language behaviour, whether of use or interpretation, is universal although what elements comprise the personal address system and what rules govern its deployment, vary across cultural contexts (Philipsen (1985: 94). Such variation in structure is according to the actual empirical literature, associated with social ends and social context of language use.

The published sources on addressing grew rapidly enough for Philipsen (1985) to pull together a comprehensive bibliography. The bibliography is comprehensive in that, it contains "the fullest report available of published, empirical studies of personal

address as a sociolinguistic phenomenon” (Philipsen 1985: 94). The contents of the bibliography show a clear picture of the various dimensions of language from which this topic has been pursued. An important distinction is made between the use of terms of address in literary genres and in natural interactive discourse; static and homogeneous address systems, resembling the Chomskyan ideal speech community theory⁶, and dynamic and diverse address systems.

In spite of the extensive empirical literature now available on personal address as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, very little has been done on African languages and societies, including Shona. The poverty of systematic work on African address systems, Shona in particular, impedes the necessary shift to comparative analysis⁷ and interpretation of personal address studies.

Brown and Gilman (1960) propose a two-dimensional parsimonious model of social meaning (Burgoon and Hale 1984: 194, Winchitz 2001: 339). Following Brown and Gilman, Brown (1965) suggests that all expressions of social meaning can be mapped into a two-dimensional space with the vertical axis being power and the horizontal axis being solidarity. In other words, Brown suggests that there exist two semantic dimensions of social meaning that are universal to all languages and along which all expressions of social meaning can be located in semantic space.

⁶ Chomsky’s (1965: 3) linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech community. For Chomsky’s theory and generative grammar in general, variation is an anomaly. It appeared to serve little purpose, occur by accident or error and to confuse rather than clarify linguistic descriptions (Gal 1975: 2).

⁷ The primary motive of Dell Hymes’ (1962) project he subsequently named the ethnography of communication, adopted in this thesis, was to “create a theory of linguistic communication which is grounded in the comparative analysis of many communities and their distinctive ways of speaking” (Philipsen and Carbaugh 1986: 387). But before this is done, we agree with Bauman and Sherzer (1989: xi) that there is need, first, for ways of speaking to be demonstrated “in all their culture specific particularity, not taken for granted or assumed a priori.”

Brown and Gilman (1960) define the power semantic as asymmetrical. It determines which pronoun is used on the basis of the difference in social status (or power) between the speaker and the addressee. When an imbalance of power is symbolized in speech, it is usually done by those with more power using the informal pronoun and receiving the formal pronoun from those with less power (Winchitz 2001: 339). The solidarity semantic however, represents more balance between individuals and is symmetrical. Brown and Gilman note that, “The similarities that matter [for the solidarity semantic] seem to be those that make for like-mindedness or similar behaviour dispositions” (258). Interlocutors often display solidarity by addressing or referring to each other using either the formal or informal pronoun.

Brown and Gilman applied their model on Indo-European languages, mainly western European (excluding contemporary standard English) and postulated that these languages have pronouns, which can be used for marking the social and affective status of the participants in a communication act. They proposed T and V (from the Latin *tu* and *vos*) symbols to represent familiarity and politeness, respectively. This distinction is analogous to that between first name (FN) and title last name (TLN) or title surname (TSN) in English and Shona, for instance. Brown and Gilman “put forward a hypothesis for the origin and spread (within a particular social and historical framework) of differentiated second person address in European languages and for the stimulus diffusion of their semantic system into adjacent language areas” (McGivney 1993:20).

Although many other researchers eventually adopted and applied Brown and Gilman’s two-dimensional model to varied languages and cultures, several theorists

have challenged its adequacy (Fitch 1991, Burgoon and Hale 1984, 1987; Danziger 1976; Friedrich 1972). Fitch's (1991) study of terms of address in Colombia calls Brown and Gilman's model "deterministic" (256). She points out that,

A deterministic theory like Brown and Gilman's suggests a mechanistic, formulaic view of meaning construction: 'If objective social condition A, B, and C exist, address X is used to mean Y. Conversely, if X is used, social conditions A, B, and C are inferred to exist.' Such an approach cannot account for creative or strategic uses of language, nor can it incorporate the subtleties of metaphors that enrich and complicate the literal and conventional uses that are encompassed by such models (256).

Fitch, like Takao (1976), instead, adopts a cultural approach, which seeks to discover the meanings of address terms shared by a particular group of people. Both Fitch and Takao argue that personal address terms serve a referential 'pointing' function (i.e. by addressing another person, a speaker invokes personal identities and establish a definition for the relationship between speaker and addressee). In her study of situated meanings of Colombian *madre* terms, Fitch shows how certain permutations of *madre* invoke particular norms (e.g. to show affection or respect) and also indexes particular Colombian cultural premises about personhood and relationships. This interest in examining the [social] meaning of particular communicative acts to those who use and produce them (Hymes 1972, 1974; Philipsen 1992) is what inspires and concerns the present study.

Some researchers have attempted to increase the number of dimensions from Brown and Gilman's two. Friedrich (1972), for example, in his study of Russian pronoun use

proposes the addition of a third dimension by separating intimacy as a third dimension. Winchitz (2001: 362) commends the addition saying, “This separation allows such German social meanings as closeness, friendship, isolation, liking, ... to be more easily accounted for, as these are not necessarily aspects of solidarity relationships but rather more often come into play when interlocutors share something between each other.” But, Winchitz still admits that,

Although Friedrich (1972) did make an important move to distinguish solidarity and intimacy as two distinct meanings that cannot be represented in the same dimension of semantic space, ... German social meanings relating to the atmosphere or conversational level between interlocutors (e.g. conversableness and structured) also appear to have no place in Friedrich’s three-dimensional model (362).

Winchitz, following Burgoon and Hale (1984) goes on to propose his eight-dimensional model for German. Although Burgoon and Hale’s eight dimension model appears to be on the right tract to providing a model that has a sound communication focus and attempts to account for the complexities of social meaning in interpersonal interaction, no model can be perceived as universal enough to adequately cater for all human languages. Hence, we suggest that perhaps the answer lies in moving away from deterministic, parsimonious schemes that claim universality to more interpretive, ethnographically based ones (Winchitz 2001: 364). Kendall (1981) argues that most semantic theories are “formulated without reference to speaker’s *intent* or the addressee’s *interpretation* of the speaker’s *intent*” (237). The present study expounds a culturally distinct system of meaning for Shona personal address and reference resources as expressed and interpreted by the speakers themselves.

We assume that address and reference behavior is one area of Shona society where, in spite of the level of modernity, the cultural system imposes certain constraints on the speech and conduct of speakers. The notions of *unhu* ‘good/ethical human behavior’, *rukudzo* ‘respect’, *ukama* ‘connectedness/relations’ and *nyadzi*, ‘bashfulness’, for instance, are central to Shona morality. Every Shona child acquires language and the moral code of her/his society simultaneously. Like language, the moral code is handed down from generation to generation and it becomes the basis of all interactions (Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom 2002: 224).

We also, however, appreciate the interlocutors’ violation of societal address and reference norms and individual creativity, similar to that suggested by Chomsky’s Generative grammar. This means that interlocutors, in their relational cultures can, using a finite set of cultural rules, ‘generate’⁸ an infinite set of address and reference resources that have never been heard before depending on what social meanings they intend to communicate through them.

Brown and Ford (1961/1964) analysed address forms used in American English. Building upon the study of Brown and Gilman, Brown and Ford found that intimacy and status of the individuals in a dyad were the most important factors determining the forms of address (Kramer 1975: 198). For instance, whether interlocutors exchange first names or titles (such as *Dr.*) plus last name is determined by such factors as age, occupational status, sex, kinship, and frequency of contact. Some data

⁸ A term coined by Chomsky after Humboldt’s (1836) linguistic theory. Whereas Humboldt’s term ‘generate’ refers to the historical development of language, Chomsky uses the term in a strictly mathematical-logical way for the listing of sentences on the basis of recursive rule mechanism. We adopt Chomsky’s use of the term and the principal involved in the application of rules, and then adapt it for our purposes.

were based on a set of modern American plays. The other data comprised of address forms reported by a male employee of a Boston business firm, questionnaires concerning address forms completed by thirty-four male business executives, and tapes containing the speeches made to and by children in the course of their daily activities (Kramer 1975: 198).

Obviously the data were not representative of the social complexity typical of American society and only few addresses made to or by women were represented in the data gathered. Brown and Ford pointed out that the principal factors that determine the speakers' decision to exchange FN or TLN are their frequency of contact, age and occupational status. For frequency of contact, "five minutes' conversation is often enough to move from a TLN relationship to a FN one. When new employees first meet their co-workers or when a person who has just moved into a neighbourhood meets the new neighbors, mutual FN is commonly exchanged as soon as the introductions are over" (Fasold 1990: 8). The patterns that can emerge from the two forms are the mutual exchange of first name or nickname by friends, the mutual use of TLN by mere acquaintances, and the non-reciprocal pattern in which one person gives FN and receives TLN. Brown and Ford observed that there was a natural progression from mutual TLN to nonreciprocal TLN/FN to mutual FN as the relationship develops from complete non-acquaintance, mere acquaintance to intimacy.

According to Brown and Ford, age and occupational status govern the non-reciprocal pattern of address choice. Where a member of the dyad is older and occupies a higher occupational status, he is given TLN and he addresses the other person with FN.

However, if the older member holds a lower occupational status than the younger person, the former is often addressed with a FN and he gives the latter, a TLN. This shows that in the American situation, age is less important than occupational status in determining address form. Thus, Brown and Ford (1964: 237) note that “when there is a conflict, for instance between a young executive and an old janitor, it will be occupational status that takes precedence; the janitor will be called by FN and address the executive by TLN.”

This thesis demonstrates that Brown and Ford’s observations are typically American and may not apply to interactions involving African speakers and culture. With regards the conflict that may arise between age and occupational status, Oyetade, in his (1995) study of address usage in Nigeria concludes that,

Contrary to the situation in American address forms, when official status/rank seems to take precedence over age in addressing an older member of a lower rank in an organization, among the Yoruba age supersedes rank. In this type of situation, reciprocal or mutual exchange TSN [Title and surname] is the rule (524).

While Oyetade’s observation for Yoruba is true of Shona as well, one should also avoid introducing another deterministic model for African languages and cultures. We suggest that there are varied choices open to interlocutors that can be revealed by a deterministic rule. The underlying factor is that the choices are often governed by cultural values such as respect, politeness, kinship, and rights and obligations. In Shona culture, for instance, social values of respect require that a married woman,

however young, be addressed either by title and husband's surname or by other social honorifics. This social obligation precedes the addressee's occupational status.

Brown and Ford make interesting observations about address shifts/switches and or the use of multiple names. On address switches, Brown and Ford note that a speaker can withdraw from the use of FN to TLN or vice versa to symbolise a positive or negative change in a relationship. This notion of address and reference is quite relevant to Shona and similar occurrences are noted in Mashiri (1999). This thesis pursues address shift in more detail in terms of the varied relationships and social contexts in which it occurs and the social meanings that it connotes.

Brown and Ford make an excellent analysis of the use and circumstances of using multiple names, particularly among friends. In this case, friends address each other with multiple names “ sometimes saying TLN, sometimes FN or LN or nickname, sometimes creating phonetic variants of either FN of nickname” (Brown and Ford 1964: 238). The use of multiple names, the relationships in which they are used and the pragmatic effects that they are meant to have on the addressee are more complex in Shona society than Brown and Ford portrays of American society.

Ervin-Tripp (1972) reorganised and expanded Brown and Ford's and Friedrich's (1966) analysis of the American English address form use using the computer flow-chart format developed by Geoghegan (1971). Dittmar (1976: 168-69) notes that

Ervin-Tripp represents the American system of address in a flow-chart diagram whose structure is a sequence of decision processes (binary decisions +, -) which ultimately lead to alternative forms of

address. These decision processes, which are represented by a set of paths, correspond to a formal grammar intended to be a logical, descriptive model of actual (psychological) decision processes.

The possible outcomes of the address choices are Title + LN; Mister + LN; Mrs. + LN; Miss + LN; Kin Title + FN; FN; Ø (on name). These ‘outcomes’ may have alternate realizations. For example, nicknames may, in certain situations alternate with FN. Ervin-Tripp (1976) in a discourse-analysis study of directives, reiterated Brown and Ford’s observation on terms of address that the addressee’s age, rank or status relative to, and familiarity with, the speaker are salient features that influence the use of different directives.

Ervin-Tripp, like Hosman (1978), found that familiarity often subordinates age and rank differences in determining the choice of address. In other words, when the speaker is very familiar with the addressee, age and rank differences become insignificant (Ho 1981: 45). We demonstrate that besides age, rank, familiarity, that Ervin-Tripp highlights, the context of the interaction, “social networks and motivations” (Hori 1986: 373) are crucial determinants of address choice. Thus, it takes into account the social meanings of address forms that Ervin-Tripp does not value.

In addition, Ervin-Tripp’s model does not include the sex of the speaker, although she does mention in one or two other articles on terms of address that men and women use address words in different ways (1971: 74). As Kramer (1975: 199) argues, the model Ervin-Tripp proposes is

...Excellent for presenting the process of choosing address terms in the peculiarly stratified world of university teachers, and it would likely serve nearly as well to describe the addressing in other quasi-formal hierarchies such as a business corporation. But it would be less satisfactory ... for a more open world, or one might say, for the everyday... encounters between non-related people who do not have formal titles such as Professor or Judge.

This thesis suggests not only that the sex of the speaker and the addressee are important factors in determining what address or reference form would be used, but also that, men and women in Zimbabwe have different repertoires of address forms from which to choose an address or reference form for a particular situation. The data in this thesis also indicates that an individual's choices reveal not only information about his or her socio-cultural views and social class but also information about a person's attitude toward members of the opposite sex. Collectively, the Shona address rules can expose information about the relationship of the sexes in Shona society.

Sampson (1979) describes the use of pronouns of address in Middle English drawing her data from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury tales* written between 1387 and 1400. "The data consists of 3,502 instances of use of Middle English THOU and YE forms" (Sampson (1979: 62) and their syntactic variants. Of significance to the present study is Sampson's approach of linking pronouns to situations in which they are uttered (Krishnamurti 1992: 85).

Like Benveniste (1971), Muhlhausler and Harre (1990) and Malone (1997), Sampson distinguishes "syntactic" pronouns from and subordinates them to "deictic" pronouns.

Traditional linguists concentrate heavily on the formal aspects (semantic, morphological and syntactic) of pronouns at sentence level to the virtual exclusion of the use of pronouns in social discourses (Muhlhausler and Harre (1990: 13). Yet, as Malone (1997: 44) observes,

The creativity of pronoun use in everyday conversation indicates how people build particular types of footings or alignments not only between speakers and hearers, but also between a speaker and his or her own utterances. It is certainly true that pronouns indicate “who” is talking and “who” is listening, but those “who’s” are very elastic.

Malone recognizes pronouns as constituents of “instances of discourse” rather than the syntax of a language. Benveniste (1971: 217) defines “instances of discourse” as “discrete and always unique acts by which the language is actualized in speech by a speaker.” The significance of context (e.g. the domain in which the addresser and the addressee are functioning and the belief system of the society in which the pronouns are used) that Sampson, Benveniste, Muhlhausler and Harre and Malone foreground, is quite central to the present study. Thus, the present study builds on this approach and attempts to show the limits of a grammatical approach. Contrary to Sampson’s study, which is based on literary data on the use of only “I” and “You”, this thesis uses naturally occurring data and includes third person pronouns and subject agreement pronominal infixes in predicates. We also add two more dimensions: that other proforms such as demonstratives and possessives can also be used as address or reference resources and that these can also be used to refer to an absent referent, whose explicit characterizations and implicit known identities give shape and meaning to talk.

Krishnamurti examines the address system involving second and third person pronouns and vocative clitics in modern Telugu and formulates “indexes which predict the correct choice of these in terms of their ‘indexical’ and ‘symbolic’ parameters of meaning” (1992: 85). Like Bean (1973) and Tyler (1986), Krishnamurti says that personal pronouns are a subset of a class of signs called ‘shifters’ or ‘deictics’, whose meanings are closely related to the situations in which they are uttered. For instance, Krishnamurti notes that when “I” is uttered in a sentence it refers to the person who utters ‘I’...” (85).

However, the present study shows that besides space or time, the speaker’s intention, the knowledge shared by the speaker and the addressee and the preference or absence of a referent also govern the choice and meaning of a pronoun as an address or reference resource. For example, when a speaker uses the personal pronoun ‘I’ to mark politeness or to mitigate a face threatening act (FTA) in Shona society, it may not refer to the person who utters ‘I’, but to a third person referred to (Mashiri et al 2002: 228). Mashiri calls this form of pronoun substitution, pronoun mismatches.

To Krishnamurti pronoun selection and use can vary with the speakers’ class membership. On the use of the singular form “*nuwwwu*” (symmetrical) Krishnamurti argues that, “uneducated rustic speakers may use *nuwwwu* to anybody, since they do not possess in their speech repertoire the co-variation between pronominal usage and politeness” (p.87). This observation is significant for assessing the speech behaviour on the streets of Harare, but it appears that impoliteness derives from a more complex network of factors such as sex, cultural values, situation, rather than just education.

Tyler (1986), writing on the Koya of India, also raises the significance of situational factors or context in determining the use and alternation of address forms. Tyler explores the variations in Koya kinship terminology. Specifically, he relates terminological variation to the contexts in which terms of address and reference are used. Tyler says

...The appropriate use of Koya kin terms cannot be predicted solely on the basis of a formal analysis predicted on the assumption of genealogical reckoning. There are many contextual factors to be taken into consideration. Among these are: social setting, audience composition, sex, age of speaker/hearer, linguistic repertoires of speaker/hearer ... and the speaker's intention (268).

The present study also foregrounds context. Nevertheless, contrary to Tyler, it demonstrates how kin term use also creates or changes context. In addition, while Tyler restricts the use of kin terms “among people who are socially defined as kinsmen” (225), this thesis, like Farghal and Shakir (1994), Dickey (1996, 2002) and Mashiri (2004), point out how this category of address usage can deviate greatly from their literal or denotative meanings. Farghal and Shakir look at the use of kin terms as relational honorifics, “connotationally to maintain and enrich social interaction among both related and unrelated participants” (242) in Jordanian Arabic society.

The present study uses Farghal and Shakir's classification of kin honorifics according to their function, into two groups: distant kin vocatives and affectionate kin vocatives. Distant kin vocatives are social honorifics that are commonly used to promote solidarity or respect in casual summons among strangers. In the Zimbabwean urban setting there are several occasions when uncertainty over address arises, especially

regarding the kin identity of strangers. In this case, there is some scope for “creative variation and exploitation within the existing address system” (McGivney 1993: 29) to express the desired social meaning.

Gender based differences in the use of terms of address and reference, as in language use in general, have been discussed and researched in a lot of studies. The stereotypes of men and women’s speech have been argued both for and against the general belief. Those who argue that men and women speak using different address and reference terms and have different purposes attribute these differences to the power relation between men and women, gender attitudes and socio-cultural constraints on women speech.

Wolfson (1989) discusses how men address women of any age or status in public places in American society using endearment address terms. She says that men usually address women whose names are not known using one of three ways: *ma’am* to show respect, no address form, or by such terms as *dear*, *hon*, *sweetheart*, or *doll* (169). According to Wolfson, the use of these endearment terms is often non-reciprocal. This means that normally, women neither initiate such terms, nor return them, except when older women are speaking with much younger men or children. Like Brown and Gilman and Frank and Anshen (1983), Wolfson states that, men’s non-reciprocal use of endearment terms reveals male dominance and female subordination in American society. The present study investigates the occurrence of this gender differential language behavior in Shona society and the extent to which it applies to the various relational or min-cultures referred to in Chapter one, that obtain in an urban setting.

Contrary to Wolfson's study, this thesis further assesses women's reaction to and interpretations of male strangers' use of endearment terms and the categories of women who receive/do not receive endearment terms. In addition to the use of differential terms between women and men in public places, the present study also looks at non-reciprocal speech style in the private space such as the family. Smith-Hefner (1988) refers to the differential speech style between women and men in Javanese. Women are required to be more polite than men in most linguistic situations, especially within the family. This asymmetric pattern reflects traditional Javanese status hierarchies in which a woman's status is lower than that of her husband within the family.

Smith-Hefner's claims are simplistic perhaps because she limits herself to generalized and institutionalized interactions. Baxter and Montgomery (1996), for example, observe that, "the communicative interface between couples and cultures" (162ff) is itself the site of dialectical tensions and dilemmas. Hopper, Knapp and Scott's (1981) intercultural study on the language behaviour of couples notes how couples create idiosyncratic ways of addressing each other. We argue that an appreciation of address behaviour in varied situations and use of interlocutors' own situated interpretation of their own experiences in using communication forms as means of revealing social meaning is a more reliable than the commonly used parsimonious models.

Frank and Anshen (1983) discuss the link between gender, and power naming [reference]. They raise two related points that are also pertinent to the present study.

First, that the right to naming brings with it power to define the named and names reflect power relations and ideological affiliations. Second,

Women and men are treated very differently when it comes to naming customs [with implications for address and reference behaviour], and that these differences often reflect with great clarity the sexism in our society (13).

Like Romaine (1994:127), Frank and Anshen argue that a woman's marital status is irrelevant and is marked only for men's convenience. But, Frank and Anshen's argument that the practices of referring to or addressing a woman using the man's family name or such titles as *Miss* or *Mrs.* symbolise women 's position as men's property and represent their status as sex objects is both culture-specific and feminist polemics.

This thesis shows that, first, the power to name and define is not always limited to the dominant groups, as Frank and Anshen suggest. Subordinate groups and individuals can use indirect or mitigating strategies of referring or addressing dominant groups or individuals. Moreover, in modern Shona society, as in many other African communities, some women perform dominant public and private roles where they enjoy the prerogative of choosing how to address or refer to members of the opposite sex within the framework or cultural rules of gender relationships. Romaine also discusses the differential use of terms of address and reference involving professional titles such as *Professor*, *Manager*, and *Chairman*. Since these titles have been adapted into Shona and are widely used, both as real titles and as fictive titles or nicknames,

we investigate how Shona speakers use them and whether they return the semantic polarization that they have in English.

Adler's (1978) study on American naming and addressing practices suggests that

...Not only that the sex of the speaker and the sex of the addressee are important factors in determining what address would be used, but also that men and women in the United States have different repertoires of address forms from which to choose an address form for a particular occasion. Women are more restricted in their possible choices of terms of address (116).

Adler's argument implies that there are no intrinsically female or male repertoires, but that the address forms used by men and women are ruled by social conventions within which women occupy a subordinate status.

Thorne and Henley (1975) discuss the use of titles and kinship terms for women and men in the English society. They observe that the title *Lord* is always reserved for deities and certain Englishmen, but any woman may call herself a *lady*. Thorne and Henley note that all the terms for women that originated as positive designations gradually acquired negative milder or abusive meanings whereas terms referring to males did not undergo pejoration at all. The courteous titles *Sir* and *Master* seem to have been used through time for men. However, *Madam*, *Miss* and *Mistress* have all undergone semantic pejoration or deterioration, becoming euphemisms respectively for "a mistress of a brothel," "a prostitute," and "a woman with whom a man habitually fornicates" (65).

According to Thorne and Henley, female kinship terms have also been used derogatorily whereas male kinship terms maintain their primary meanings. *Niece* is used as a euphemism for “a priest’s illegitimate daughter or concubine,” *aunt* first meant “an old woman,” and then ‘a bawd or a prostitute,’ and *sister* connotes “a disguised whore” in the seventeenth century (65-66).

The Shona language has borrowed some of the English titles and kinship terms for men and women through language and cultural contact necessitated by colonialism and evangelism (Chikanza 1986, Chimhundu 1983). However, an investigation of the social meanings implied by these choices rather than their use derogatorily or normally along gender lines is what is sociolinguistically interesting. Hence, unlike Thorne and Henley’s study, we show that kinship terms derive their meanings from the contexts of their use and the intentions of the speakers. This means that a term can undergo semantic pejoration in one context of use but returns its original meaning in another context.

Ulman (1967) and Adler (1978) argue that, unlike terms referring to men, female forms move in a degrading direction (Adler 1978: 112). Both writers suggest that the degeneration of terms designating women is associated with euphemism and prejudice. Stephen’s observations on the connotation of the terms, *woman* and the supposed to be neutral title *Ms* are quite significant to the present study. Stephens says that the term *woman* was avoided since it acquired the meaning mistress (connoting, ‘a kept woman’) and *Ms*, now used to replace *Miss* and *Mrs.*, still is ambiguous. In Shona society two terms exist for woman and female; *mukadzi* and *mudzimai*, and speakers’ use of either of these terms depend on the desired meaning and

communicative effect. Shona speakers deduce varied interpretations, depending on the values they subscribe to, when they are used in different situations. The terms *Ms.* seems to present worse problems in Shona than in English since Shona speakers have to battle with an additional problem of translation and translation equivalencies and untranslatability⁹.

A number of studies have raised the notion of politeness as an important sociolinguistic variable in the analysis of speech behaviour, including women and men's speech styles in relation to address and reference behaviour. Chapter three gives an elaborate discussion of the traditional Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness and Goffman's (1967) notion of 'face' and the modification that we suggest in order to ensure its utility for Shona language behaviour.

Traditionally, following Brown and Levinson's conception, politeness is "putting things in such a way as to take account of the feelings of the hearer" (Brown and Gilman (1989:161) or "an expression of concern for the feelings of others (Holmes 1995: 4). Brown and Gilman further state that the speakers' vertical social distance or power, horizontal social distance or solidarity and the intrinsic extremity of the face threatening act universally determines their selection of discourse strategies (163). Social distance determines the constraints felt and the liberties taken in speech exchanges (Brown and Levinson 1978: 77). The social distance or power variable has perhaps been most exclusively explored in work on gender based speech style.

⁹ Catford (1965) distinguishes two types of untranslatability: linguistic and cultural. The term *Ms.* poses both linguistic and cultural untranslatability challenges to Shona speakers. On the linguistic level, "untranslatability occurs when there is no lexical or syntactic substitute in the target language (TL) for a source language (SL) item" whereas cultural untranslatability "is due to the absence in the TL culture of a relevant situational feature for the SL text" (Bassnett-McGuire (1980: 32).

Lakoff (1973, 1975) says that women tend to use more polite forms and that this politeness is attributable to their inferior and unstable social position. This is an essentially feminist model of power relations that presupposes a correlation between males and power and females and powerlessness (Lakoff 1975; Spender 1980). The major weakness of this model, as the present study reveals, is that of overgeneralising the significance of social power and trivialising interactional power.

In engaging in interaction, speakers, female or male, are also at the same time mapping out for themselves a position in relation to the power relations within the group and within the society as a whole. This is what we would like to call interactional power, to differentiate it from social power, where roles may or may not be delineated for individuals by their relations to institutions, by their class positions, and so on. Therefore, it is possible for someone who has been allocated a fairly powerless position institutionally to accrue to themselves, however temporarily, a great deal of interactional power by their verbal dexterity, for instance. This thinking shows that there is need for a gender model that allows for variations within the categories of 'men' and 'women' and allows for the possibility of contestation and change.

Drawing on Brown and Levinson's work, Holmes (1995) also argues that in general women are more polite than men.

Most women enjoy talk and regard talking as an important means of keeping in touch, especially with friends and intimates. They use language to establish, nurture and develop personal relationships...(2).

Lakoff and Holmes's studies seem to support the global view of women's language, influenced by Coates (1996) and Tannen's (1991) work on co-operative and competitive strategies. Thus, Holmes asserts that women are more polite than men as they are more concerned with the affective rather than referential aspect of utterances. This thesis contests Holmes's notion, first by illustrating instances of impoliteness, and second, by arguing that an important element of politeness is judging whether an utterance is appropriate or not, either in relation to the perceived norms of the situation or the perceived norms of the society as a whole. This position follows Mead's observation that "every society set up societal norms for men and for women which go beyond what would be required by the biological differences of the sexes" (1949: 8).

A different view to language, gender and politeness has been offered by Hori's (1986) study on the use of honorific morphemes in Japanese, Risch's (1987) study based on North American data, de Klerk's (1992) empirical study on South Africa and Mashiri (2000a) on Shona street remarks in an urban setting. Hori's data shows that in Japanese society "male and female differences in language use arise not so much from the choice of linguistic forms based on sex differences as from the different sorts of company men and women keep or the different roles they play in society" (Hori 1986: 385). Risch's, de Klerk and Mashiri's studies demonstrate that "women do use derogatory language and appear to be doing so in large numbers" (de Klerk 1992: 278).

De Klerk and Bosch (1997) discuss nicknaming among the Xhosa-speaking children and adolescents in South Africa. The difference offered between children's nicknames

and adolescents' nicknames is in the name-givers at the childhood and adolescence stage:

...This means that in early childhood most such names are given by parents within the family unit ... later, during adolescence, new nicknames are more commonly given by peers and teachers (95).

The suggestion that childhood nicknames are given by parents only portrays a rather simplistic picture of the African family setting. We acknowledge Busse's (1983:305) classification of nicknames according to usage patterns: (1) those used only by friends and acquaintances, (2) those used only by family members, and (3) those used by family, friends and acquaintance. This classification caters for the role of siblings and caregivers in nicknaming within the family unit. While de Klerk and Bosch limit themselves to the family and school setting, Busse's classification enables us to look at the use and function of nicknames in varied relational cultures or mini-cultures, (as defined in Chapter one) both private and public. It also allows us to consider nicknames children use to refer to parents, other adult relatives, nicknames that speakers in subordinate positions use to refer to their superiors, nicknames for loved ones, enemies (potential/suspected), in-group and out-group members, and so forth. Our assumption is that as speakers use nicknames as address or reference resources they are accomplishing a wide variety of goals.

Related to nicknames, are playful insults that are used in "joking relationships" (McGivney 1993: 19; Collinson 1992: 105), "friendships" (Bell and Healey 1992: 307), "gangs" (Rymes 1996: 237), "intimate talk" (Hopper et al, 1981) and "play house" (Emihovich 1981: 191). Besides playful insults, we shall also look at the use

of serious insults that interlocutors use and their social meanings in varied relational cultures.

One other address or reference strategy related to nicknaming and characteristic of particular relational cultures is the use of slang. Farb (1973) aptly defines the link between slang and the relational context from which it derives and in which it is used:

Slang is not the naïve speech of the common man (contrary to what is generally believed). It is rather the speech of those who, for one reason or another, consider themselves members of the select or separate group. The common denominator of all slang, whether it is the speech of adolescents, or the jive-talk of musicians, is that it tests who belongs to the group and who is an intruder (78).

Farb stresses how slang expresses relational identity. The present study builds on this definition but also shows various other interactional uses of slang among urban sub-cultures.

2.1.2 *Address and reference practices in Shona*

No work has been done on personal reference in Shona to date. Hence, this thesis will work as a launch pad for sociolinguistic studies in this area. Nevertheless, research on personal address has been steadily gathering momentum since Mashiri's (1999) article, 'Terms of address in Shona: A Sociolinguistic Approach'. The results of this article and those of subsequent studies on varied aspects of urban language behaviour were stimuli to this thesis.

Mashiri (1999) offers a general analysis of address practices in both traditional and modern society. The present study, however, limits itself to the modern and urban address and reference practice, notwithstanding the fact that there may be continuities between traditional and modern systems. Mashiri divides social relations that determine the choice of address terms into two broad categories: joking and respect (1999: 94). In the present study, we demonstrate that in reality, these are not always discrete categories. They sometimes occur in a continuum. Fitch (1998) makes the similar observations on Colombian address usage. Describing how two women who are employer and employee but at the same time sharing a history of being old-time friends use address forms to manage their relationship, Fitch says,

By the time I met them, the talk between these two women reflected thoroughly blurred relational boundaries. They teased and argued like sisters, confided as to a close friend, and gave and received orders as employer and employee (124).

One type of address device that Mashiri discusses in detail that this thesis also considers is the nickname. Busse (1983: 300) says that “there is no general agreement on what constitutes a nickname” and Mashiri (1999: 102) on the distinction between nicknames and endearment terms says, “sometimes it is difficult to draw a line between endearment names and nicknames because endearment can be marked in nicknames.” This thesis investigates how social meanings deriving from the use of nicknames or endearment terms mark any distinction between these address and reference resources.

Mawadza's (2000) article discusses Harare Shona slang from a linguistic point of view, but makes interesting sociolinguistic observations. Mawadza makes an implicit distinction between "fixed" or denotative meanings of words and "connotative" meanings (95). The present study, as has been shown in Chapter one, considers this [explicit] distinction crucial for the understanding of the utility of nominal forms as address or reference terms since "the social meaning of a word when used as an address [or reference term] does not necessarily have a close connection to that word's literal meaning" (Dickey 1997: 255).

The terms 'standard' language and 'non-standard' language that Mawadza (2000: 94) uses to distinguish Shona slang from the standard language are important in assessing whether or not the use of slang address terms is gendered. This is important because female speech has traditionally been (mis)construed as 'standard' and lady-like and male speech as non-standard and tough (Trudgill 1974: 191).

Mawadza also looks at how slang utilises metaphorical extensions in Shona. The present study builds on her observations and elaborately examines metaphors as address and reference devices. Eble (1996: 68) says, "a metaphor names one thing by something in another domain, calling forth a likeness or analogy between things that are fundamentally different." In Shona the most obvious metaphoric words that are used as terms of address or reference applies to the linkage of animal characteristics to human ones. In their study on the use of metaphorical language in HIV/AIDS discourse in Shona society, Mashiri, Maowmo and Tom (2002) note that,

In Shona society, verbal play such as this
is deemed an effective instrument of social

control, being used for lampooning
persons and events in a cheerful manner
(231).

Mawadza addresses one other important aspect: the phonological manipulation that speakers make when using the slang version of some kin terms. What Mawadza does not stress, which the present study emphasises, is the social meaning that speakers intend to achieve by making the phonological manipulations. Certain sounds are eliminated from the words *brother* and *sekuru*, for instance, to come up with the address terms *blaz*, and *kulez*, respectively without an immediate change in meaning but essentially to convey a certain attitude towards the subject or addressee.

Chitauo (1995) discusses a number of ways in which Shona men generally refer to women derogatorily and how the women are socialised to accept subordinate roles. In a related sociolinguistic study, Mashiri (2000a) discusses street remarks that some Zimbabwean men hail at women strangers that they perceive as acting against the ideal cultural mould or framework. In the present study, we discuss derogatory terms used by both men and women in varied situations and relationships and attempt to show the cultural ideology embedded in the address forms and references.

Both Chitauo and Mashiri conclude that most of the remarks made or addresses used by men to women take the form of derogatory or pejorative sexual slang and that the tendency to blame women for loss of identity typifies the Zimbabwean urban patriarchal culture. A common aspect of reference and addressing related to street remarks that Mashiri does not discuss, but is explored in the present study is labeling based on religious, ethnic, and class stereotypes that amount to insults. Berlitz (1995:

327) says that, “Perhaps no aspect of language is more slanted and prejudiced than that of ethnic, racial and religious insults.”

Mashiri (2003a) explores the use of address terms in service encounter relationships, with special focus on mobile communities that use public transport in Harare. This study clearly links the use of address and reference terms to politeness and respect. The concepts of politeness and respect are also critical to the interpretation of social meaning in address and reference behaviour in other relational cultures described in this thesis. The notions of markedness¹⁰ and style shifting raised in Mashiri (2003a) are also connected to social meaning since the markedness of linguistic choices in interaction shows the value of these choices as means of achieving a speaker’s specific desired discourse goal. The use of kin terms in negotiation, for example, obliges the addressee to perform or not to perform a particular action for or against the speaker.

Mawomo (2001) applies the concept of negotiation to his study on the use of language of negotiation and bargaining by sellers in the flea markets of Harare. Jones and Putman (1982) describe communication in negotiation as the exchange of structural information between bargaining individuals or groups with vested interests, striving to reach a mutual agreement. While Jones and Putman’s conception of negotiation, which the present study subscribes to, is both speaker and hearer/addressee oriented, Mawomo’s is only speaker oriented since he is primarily concerned with the seller’s negotiation devices. The present study considers the market as a significant context

¹⁰ The notion of markedness that we refer to in this thesis is as defined by Myers-Scotton (1993). Markedness refers to the social or personal effects of the choice of a particular language or style in a given situation. Put simply, speakers make unmarked choices to signify that they are comfortable with the interaction and/or the relationship between themselves and the other speakers but make marked choices to change an existing relationship within an interaction or negotiate a new relationship.

for the study of naming and address practices. But, unlike Mawomo's study restricted to the flea market, this thesis, apart from considering the linguistic forms used by both the seller and the buyer, includes other forms of markets featuring different types of sellers and buyers in terms of social class, gender, age, religion and location of market.

Chitando (1998, 2001) and Mashiri (2003b) discuss the communicative significance and the social meanings of 'theophoric names' (Chitando 2001: 144). Theophoric names resemble Shona traditional names that were laden with meaning. "First names provided an opportunity to thank the spiritual world, to mark requests, complain, look to the future, address components, and numerous other functions" (Chitando 2001: 145). We identify theophoric names as indirect reference strategies directed to the human addressee and also as symbols of religious identity. The address and reference usage involving the divine address or referent is without the scope of this dissertation, though it constitutes rich sources for social meaning.

Pongweni (1996) makes a thorough study of the social communicative role of Shona praise poetry, the act of praising, and their poetic and genealogical features. This information is significant to the present study since it considers praise names as address or reference terms used in urban society to connote respect, solidarity, insult, persuade/encourage or applause. Pongweni (1982) gives a comprehensive analysis of war names, their origins, function and meanings. The present study, however, looks at war-related terms that interlocutors use as address or reference forms today, the semantic shifts or shades that they have acquired since independence and the pragmatic functions

of these names. The term *comrade*, for example, has been widely used to imply varied social meanings in both political and social discourse.

Kahari (1990) acknowledges the social significance of Shona names. However, he, like colonial anthropologists, lists types of Shona names according to their semantic categories and provides a morphological analysis of the names. The morphological analysis per se invalidates the communicative value of the names that the present research seeks to highlight.

2.2 Summary

The literature review provided a comprehensive survey of literature on address and reference practices that reflected an absence of serious research on African languages in general, and Shona specifically. We divided the review into two areas: a general review and a review of literature specific to Shona. We found this broad review necessary since address and reference systems are universal phenomena. Thus, a study of Shona address behavior can only be understood within the broad framework of research carried elsewhere.

We proceeded from the monumental but limited work of Brown and Gilman (1960) through various works to more modern works of Oyetade (1995), Winchatz (2001) Dickey (2002) and Mashiri (2003a) among others. The general review reflected the conceptual/theoretical assumptions informing address research across cultures and the influence of specific cultures on the respective assumptions. It became clear from the review that although address or reference systems are universal, their interpretations are largely governed by particular cultural systems.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical framework

It is clear from Chapters one and two that this study is based on a cultural perspective on interpersonal communication. This perspective views personal address and reference terms as communicative resources whose patterns and meanings of their use are culture-specific¹¹ (Fitch 1991, 1998). The discussion in Chapter one, on the centrality of social meaning in the study of personal address and reference usage shows how personal address and reference terms are a fundamental aspect of interpersonal communication, which reveals the basic symbolic categories that reference identity and relationships within the Shona community. Thus, they are part of “a socially negotiated, individually applied, culturally distinctive, and historically grounded expressive system” (Carbaugh 1995: 280).

The concept of system here implies that a patterned use and interpretation of a term of address or reference is only one part of a larger “galaxy” (Schneider 1976) of situations and expressions. To conceptualise culture, then, as a system of expression, is to emphasise that one explores how a term of address or reference (like the choice of *sekuru*, to address a low-class male worker (Mashiri forthcoming) functions within a larger communicative situation; what its social meanings are in this system; on what various occasions it is used and to what ends; what are its limits of expression; and what ideas and ideologies go along with it or are refracted by it? The fact that cultural

¹¹ We implicitly challenge the notion that the values and assumptions embedded in personal relationships research and theory constructed in Euro-American contexts is universal.

symbolic forms such as personal address and reference forms are individually applied and socially negotiated implies that some address or reference use patterns may be distinctive to a particular relational culture or dyad, but not known or used by the whole community and may not be derived from the community's cultural history. For a pattern to be culturally forceful, its expressive force would be felt deeply and accessible as part of a historically transmitted communal conversation (Carbaugh 1988a, 1988b).

3.1.1 Ethnography of communication

The present study is rooted in the theoretical tradition of the ethnography of communication (EC), with the politeness theory used as a supplementary framework. The EC derives from anthropological linguistics¹² (Foley 1997) and, more specifically, from American cultural anthropology (Williams 1992: 172, Forgas 1983: 277). Although the concept of EC emerged in the 1960s, it has a longer history in that it arises from the language philosophy of Herder and relies heavily on the work of the cultural anthropologists Sapir and Whorf. Many of the sociolinguistic analysis of language choices are in effect anthropological descriptions of the relevant rules of a particular culture, prescribing which communication code is to be used in which situation (see Gumperz and Hymes 1972, Ferguson 1959 and Platt 1977).

¹² This study is not concerned with the terminological debate in this field. While the term anthropological linguistics is widely used and a respectable journal exists under this name, some scholars strongly argue for the preference of the term linguistic anthropology (e.g. Teeter 1964, Salzmänn (1993). We consider this terminological debate frivolous. Instead, emphasis should be on the distinction between linguistics proper and anthropological linguistics. As Salzmänn (4) and Giglioli 1972: 9-10) separately argue, linguistics is concerned with language structure, whereas the interest of anthropological linguistics is in speech use and relations that exist between language on the one hand and society and culture, on the other.

The descriptive theory informing the EC derives from Hymes's (1962, 1972, 1986) programmatic statement. Hymes emphasises the discovery of locally managed systems of speaking. As far back as 1972, Hymes called researchers to examine the "means of speech [...] and their meanings to those who use them" (2). Applied to the study of personal address and reference usage, such an interpretive research approach¹³ would focus on the variety of meanings speakers bring to their interactions and, in turn, would open up a way to get at the nuanced particulars of social meaning than explanatory parsimonious models (e.g. Brown and Gilman's 1960 and Friedrich's 1972) ignore (Philipsen 1992, Winchitz 2001, Mashiri 2004).

Central to the EC approach is the view of culture as a system of symbols and meanings (Mead 1934, Schneider 1976) and focus on how interlocutors express and enact the system through ways of speaking. Halliday (1978) expresses the same thing in another way:

The culture itself is as semiotic system, a system of meanings and information that is encoded in the behaviour potential of the members, including their verbal potential – that is, their linguistic system. The linguistic system is only one form of the realisation of the general semiotic system, which constitutes the culture (122).

Both representations of situations, and language are aspects of culture, created, maintained and revised in the course of our daily interactions with each other. Essentially, then, this view of culture is that "the conceptual resources are both

¹³ An interpretive approach also take into account the speakers' own situated interpretation of their communicative experiences. This interpretation reveals varied forms of social meanings of address forms than Brown and Gilman's (1960) monumental but limited model.

constructed through talk practices and reflected in them, such that the connection between talk and culture is indivisible” (Fitch 1998: 15).

Hymes’s EC suggests that, to describe cultural practices and principles of communication, researchers organise their studies around one of the various social units such as a speech community, a speech situation, communicative event, act, style, or the general way of speaking. Chief among these concepts is the concept of speech community, “an idea that grounds thinking about communication in a social group and the diverse resources being used by its members to constitute its patterns of social living” (Carbaugh 1995: 279). We shall return to the discussion of the concept of the speech community later on in this section.

The communicative act referred to in the EC formulation is the personal address or reference usage, in the case of this study. We argued somewhere in Chapter one that, while enduring cultural conventions, often reflecting underlying value systems and the socio-economic structures that play a major role in the regulation of address and reference practices, situational variables are also important. Some ethnographic studies (e.g. Tyler 1972, Takao 1976, Mashiri 2003a) demonstrated the significance of contextual factors in address choice and usage.

EC studies summarise the contextual factors with the SPEAKING mnemonic (*Situation* is the setting and scene; *Participants* are personalities, social positions, statuses, relations; *Ends* are the goals and outcomes; *Acts* are the message content, form sequences, dimensions, and types of illocutionary force; *Key* is the tone or mode; *Instrumentalities* are the channel, media; *Norms* are of interaction and

interpretation; *Genre* are native and formal) (Carbaugh 1995: 179). Each of the italicised concepts suggests a question about address or reference term usage, such as; in what situation is it occurring, among what participants, toward what ends?

The analysis of personal address and reference usage in Shona seeks to answer these questions, among others. The EC descriptive theory is used in the present study in two ways. One, it is used for describing use of address or reference forms in specific contexts, “thus serving as a theory for describing actual communication practices” (Carbaugh, Ibid: 279). Two, it is also used to interpret, the cultural status or participant view of the social meanings deriving from the use of particular terms, thus serving as a theory for interpreting communication practices (Fitch 1991, Philipsen 1992, Winchitz 2001, Mashiri 2004).

Philipsen (1992) makes a significant contribution to the EC theory by adding the interpretive function cited in the second point raised above. A large body of ethnographic fieldwork has shown that three cultural structures are prominent in the conduct and interpretation of communication. These three are part of the speech code concept and are models of personhood, society and strategic action (Philipsen 1992: 136). In other words, as people communicate, they employ symbols and meanings that explicate, or implicate messages about persons, social life, and strategic action.

Philipsen’s (1992) study on Teamsterville shows a system of symbolic expressions that constitute, in that community, a proper kind of person, a “man” is. Wieder and Pratt (1990) describe ways Osage Indians communicate to be recognised as a “real Indian.” Similarly, Fitch (1991) describes how Colombian ways of addressing each

other through terms that derive from *madre* (mother) create a cultural persona of mother and structure relations in their use. Mashiri's (2004) study on the social meanings deriving from the use of kinship terms of address among non-kin Shona interlocutors in an urban setting also demonstrates how the Shona concepts of *unhu* (personhood) and *ukama* (connectedness) determine address choice and practice. Carbaugh (1994) describes how the person in Middle America is symbolised as "an individual" who "has rights" and "makes choices." These studies suggest that terms and meanings that identify persons, or kinds of persons, as social agents in society are prominent among the symbols and symbolic forms communities use for communication. A person's identity and what s/he can and should do, govern the conduct and interpretation of communication.

A second prominent feature is the way social relations are culturally coded into the communication process. For example, communicative dynamics, although conducted in their own distinctive ways, are found to create gender relations among Colombians (Fitch 1991) and the Shona (Mashiri 2004), and egalitarian relations among Appalachians (Ray 1987). What these studies suggest about communication is that the social position(s) one holds, the ways it is related to others, the nature of these relations, and their possible solidification as an institutional form provide basic materials for the conduct and interpretation of communication.

3.1.1.1 *The speech community*

The title of this thesis suggests that it is possible to identify a particular group of people in Harare as Shona¹⁴. This is because "to talk one way is to be something that

¹⁴ Although 'Shona' usually refers to the 'standard' variety based on a structuralist view of 'language,' our idea of a speech community is based on Stroud's (2001) construct of "linguistic citizenship". The strength of this construct is that it enables us to reconceptualise the notion of 'language' to mean a

people who talk differently are not” (Murchison 1996). Within a society or a culture, speech patterns, like ways of addressing or reference, become tools that speakers manipulate to group themselves and categorise others with whom they are interacting (see Winchatz 2001 and Mashiri, forthcoming).

When speakers group themselves together in this manner, they form a speech community. Gumperz (1972) defines the speech community as

Any human aggregate characterised by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language use (219).

A speech community, according to Gumperz, revolves around norms for language that relate to usage, origins, and the relationships between speech patterns and social action (Johnson 2000: 27).

Viewed in another way, the human aggregate can be perceived as any group of people that share some common attributes such as language, region, race, ethnicity, age, occupation, religion, sexual orientation, and so forth. Gumperz defines interaction as “a social process in which utterances are selected in accordance with socially recognised norms and expectations” (220). Hymes (1972) also highlights the notion of “a shared body of verbal signs” when he says that members of a speech community share “rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety” (54).

“world of interaction governed not simply by the standard form of one’s own ethnic language, by the stylistic and strategic deployment of numerous styles as well as a range of other languages” (Stroud, 340).

Many sociolinguists have interpreted Hymes's definition in at least two ways. One is that a speech community is an interacting group in which most members know and have a chance to interact with one another (Scollon and Scollon 1981, Sequeira 1993). Alternatively, larger and less tightly connected groups, and even more heterogeneous societies have been defined as speech communities on the basis of shared ways of speaking that cut across subgroups (Fitch 1998: 23). This view suggests that an individual's affiliation to a speech community may be empirically established by familiarity with those ways of speaking rather than personal acquaintance with most or all members of the group.

Fitch's perspective, which this study adopts, acknowledges that each speaker in a community has several groups which s/he want to identify with at any given time or situation. Saville-Troike (1989) refers to this as a person's "repertoire of social identities." Each identity that a person assumes is "associated with a number of approximate verbal and non-verbal forms of expression" (20). Personal address and reference terms are among linguistic forms that can convey each identity. According to LePage (1986), people "create their linguistic systems so as to resemble those of the group with which from time to time they wish to identify" (23). This means that a person participates in many different speech communities, which sometimes contradict or overlap, and will vary according to time, place, situation, and interlocutors.

Just as an individual has a range of identities, so a speech community, as a whole, has a range of roles and identities for all the different sub-groups within the community.

The range of linguistic varieties that speakers use to express these relationships is the community's communicative repertoire. This repertoire can include different languages, different regional or social dialects, different registers, and/or different channels of communication (oral, written, manual). In theory, an individual member should be able to employ all varieties and styles in the communicative repertoire, but in reality, it is not likely that s/he can produce the complete range (Saville-Troike 1989: 49). In considering the Shona's communicative repertoire of address or reference forms, we describe the patterns of usage that include borrowed terms that are either fully assimilated into Shona or occur in mixed speech that conform to the morphosyntactic rules of Shona (Mashiri 2002a: 245) and dialectal forms that occur in marked use (Myers-Scotton 1993a).

In approaching the urban Shona speakers as a speech community, therefore, we did not presume consensus among distinct, often conflicting or overlapping, identities. Where patterned ways of addressing and reference differed among sub-groups, or relational cultures, as we call them in Chapter one, and where the symbolic meanings are disputed, we have discussed these differences.

We drew the sample of informants for this study from a broad cross-section of residents of Harare who are native speakers of Shona. The commonalities that these people share are based on shared cultural knowledge of personhood and relationships and experiences reflected in their use of address and reference forms, among other things. The same people, however, could belong to various smaller speech communities, and in addition to the communal repertoire, they possess more localised

and idiosyncratic repertoires based on class, age, social class, sex, religion, occupation, friendship, family, school, etc.

3.1.1.2 *Communicative competence*

One of the key questions that this study attempts to answer is: who is using what address or reference terms to whom and in what situations? This question cannot be answered adequately (if at all), by simply looking at the traditional “linguistic” structure, but also at the social structure of the terms as a linguistic subsystem. This means that the simplicity of the grammatical paradigms belies the complexity of language use. We advocate an interactional solution by rejecting Chomsky’s (1965) notion of linguistic competence¹⁵ in favour of Hymes’s (1962, 1972) broader communicative competence, which refers to a speaker’s ability to function effectively in a whole communicative situation rather than merely the ability to produce grammatical sentences (Parkinson 1985: 3).

Communicative competence involves, “knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation” (Saville-Troike 2003: 18). A reformulation of this definition in order to capture the use of address or reference terms in managing interactional business would be: communicative competence entails knowing what interpersonal functions may be accomplished, and how, through both conventional and creative uses of personal

¹⁵ Chomsky defines linguistic competence as the ideal native speaker-hearer’s (of a homogenous speech community) unconscious knowledge of grammaticality, a system of rules which he/she has mastered so that he/she is able to produce and understand an indefinite number of sentences, and to recognise grammatical mistakes and ambiguities (Chomsky 1965: 3, Crystal 1991: 66). Following Saussure’s language-parole distinction, Chomsky makes a distinction between competence (the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations). Since Chomsky’s theory is mentalistic and decontextualised it concerns itself only with linguistic competence. All social factors are placed under performance, which is barely explained.

address resources (Fitch 1991: 270). We assume that term of address usage is rule-governed behaviour and the answer to the question posed above will reveal the factors that constrain these rules. It is these rules that guide the interpretation of the terms' social meanings or possible meanings.

The foregoing discussion stressed how the EC theory provides for a culturally situated interpretation of personal address and reference terms as communicative resources through which interlocutors manage social and personal relationships. In managing the relationships interlocutors display knowledge (communicative competence) of their language and culture and the communicative values of Shona society. This knowledge denotes

All the formal and pragmatic principles the speaker needs to know both in order to produce formally grammatical utterances in his [her] language and to use such utterances/expressions felicitously (Mufwene 1986: 21).

The pragmatic principles include knowing when, where and how to use styles of speaking to “minimise and sometimes totally eliminate risks” (Obeng 1997: 203), and to make “distance, deference and camaraderie” (Pan 1995: 464). The notion “styles of speaking” implies the speakers' ability to create individualised or to use existing linguistic forms creatively in varied situations and relationships. Mashiri (forthcoming) show that one pragmatic principle that motivates Shona speakers to prefer certain [kinship] forms of address to others is the desire to express respect or politeness for the addressee.

3.1.2 *Politeness theory*

In order to explain what prompts Shona speakers to select polite forms of address, to whom they offer them, in what situations and what meanings they imply through them, we propose to employ Brown and Levinson's (1987) "face management" (see Mashiri 2003a) theory of politeness modified to accommodate the notion of impoliteness.

3.1.2.1 *Theorising politeness*

There has been controversy (still unresolved) on the independence or interdependence of personal address and reference forms and politeness. Dickey (1996, 2002), Wood and Kroger (1991) and Braun (1988), for example, argue for interdependence, while Kasper (1990) views politeness and address as essentially independent systems. We choose a middle of the road position for now, until directed otherwise by empirical data. Following Mashiri's (2004) study on Shona, Obeng's (1997) on Akan and Farghal and Shakir's (1994) study on Jordanian Arabic, We assume that the two systems are interdependent. The three studies demonstrate that address and reference forms themselves are an integral part of polite language use and therefore, they feature prominently in several of the strategies described by politeness theory. However, We recognise that "the universal concern with face [the basis of politeness theory] can take on various local significations depending on the particular cultural setting in which it is enacted" (Chen 1991: 110).

However, Mashiri (2004), like Kasper (1990) defines the choice of a specific address form as "social indexing" which depends on the relationship (or perceived

relationship) between the interlocutors. This is opposed to “strategic politeness,” where choices are made dependent upon situational variables and intentions (Kasper 1990: 194-197). One way of reconciling these two positions is to adopt Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory and then modify it to cater for what we will call ‘pseudo-politeness,’ that is, use of linguistic forms whose literal meaning denote politeness, yet the speaker uses them connotatively to imply superficial politeness or impoliteness for that matter.

Since Brown and Levinson’s theory derives from a Western cultural perspective (Pan 1995, Matsumoto 1988), we propose to further modify it to suit the Shona [African] situation where linguistic behaviour is not entirely determined by the dynamics of individual interactions and individual speakers’ choice, but also by cultural conventions. Hence, the social normative view of politeness, which some Western linguists dismiss as “lay conception of politeness” (Holtgraves 2001: 342), is also important. In this view,

To be polite is to behave in accordance with rules prescribing appropriate behaviour in a particular context; violating these rules results in negative evaluations, behaving in accord with them results in positive evaluations (Holtgraves, 342).

Therefore, besides using the politeness theory as an interpretive tool, we will also use the empirical data to test the applicability of Brown and Levinson’s principles to Shona and perhaps, conclude whether or not there is linguistic strategic politeness in Shona.

We shall now present a brief overview of the existing politeness approaches and justify my choice of Brown and Levinson's theory by providing a conceptual analysis of the elements of politeness, the motivations for politeness and the impact of social context on politeness.

Currently, there are a number of different approaches to politeness (see Fraser, 1990). Besides the normative view of politeness referred to above, the other example of a politeness perspective is the work of Lakoff (1973, 1979) and Leech (1983). For these authors politeness is a pragmatic phenomenon. Hence, they set out to specify the principles regarding pragmatic competence. Generally, both authors attempt to supplement Grice's (1975) asocial conversational maxims (relation, quality, quantity and manner) with various politeness maxims regarding which linguistic form is preferred over another. Lakoff's maxims include: give options, don't impose, and make the other feel good, and Leech's include maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy.

A third approach, and the one we adopt in this study (with modifications suggested above) is Brown and Levinson's (1987) face management view of politeness. We describe this theory as "face management view" because it is based on the concept of 'face' (Goffman 1967). Brown and Levinson argue that politeness is conveyed (implicated) via deviation from Grice's (1975) cooperation principle. Hence, politeness is not a result of linguistic behaviour constrained by maxims but is "instead a means of dealing with a conflict between speaking efficiently (in accord with Grice's maxims) and managing the face of the interactants" (Holtgraves 2001: 342).

Brown and Levinson's theory focuses on the social context as the primary determinant of face threat assessment and hence the extent to which one will be polite.

Brown and Levinson's theory presupposes that human beings possess two kinds of "face:" positive face and negative face. Positive politeness strategies are attempts by a speaker to treat an addressee as a friend. For a Shona speaker, when a doctor says to a child, "*Shama tione shamwari*" (Open your mouth so that we examine you my friend.) would be an example of positive politeness, according to Brown and Levinson. Negative politeness, on the hand, is an attempt by the speaker to save the addressee or co-present listener or over-hearer by engaging in some formality, restraint or indirection. For a Shona speaker, an example of negative politeness would be addressing an unacquainted adult female vegetable seller as *ambuya* (mother-in-law).

Since face is vulnerable to face-threatening acts (FTAs), speakers use linguistic forms strategically to reduce the (potential) risk that FTAs pose. Hence, politeness is a face saving strategy, functioning to preserve face so that interaction can proceed without causing one or both parties involved to lose face.

In Brown and Levinson's theory, the social variables taken into consideration are: (a) the relative power (P) between the speaker and the hearer, (b) the relative social distance (D) between the speaker and the hearer, and (c) the ranking (R) of imposition of FTAs (Pan 1995: 465). Speakers determine the strategies they can use on the basis

of calculation of these three variables. Brown and Levinson classify the speakers' strategies as:

1. bold-on-record – the direct way of saying things;
2. positive politeness – the expression of solidarity;
3. negative politeness – the expression of restraint; and
4. off-record politeness – the avoidance of unequivocal impositions (e.g. hints).

Each of these categories includes many detailed strategies specifying the condition and function of the politeness strategies.

Although the bare bones of the notion of face is universal, in a particular society it is subject to elaboration. Each culture has its own notion of what kinds of acts threaten face, what kinds of personal style are especially appreciated (Pan 1995: 465).

What Pan implies is that, the use of politeness strategies may vary in different cultures. While we agree with Pan, we would still think that these universal strategies are as deterministic as the variables listed above. We shall apply the concept of politeness but construct the variables or the strategies from the empirical data of accounts of the native speakers' understanding of politeness. This approach correlates with the interpretive ethnographic approach used in this study.

3.1.2.2 *The neglect of impoliteness*

Brown and Levinson's concentration on strategies that avoid the performance of FTAs results in the overlooking of the area of linguistic impoliteness. As Eelen (2001: 90) argues, their positive and negative politeness strategies "stipulate how to be polite

rather than impolite”. Eelen argues that politeness and impoliteness are “two sides of a coin,” and therefore, “any theory that pretends to say something valuable about one side, automatically needs to deal with the other side as well.” Culpeper (1996: 350) supports this argument saying that in order for a theory of politeness to be comprehensive, it is integral that the topic of linguistic impoliteness is addressed.

Using Brown and Levinson’s line of thought, we assume that FTAs uttered by participants without redressive action¹⁶ (bald on-record) would be regarded as impolite. By implication, in some instances it is not in the interest of participants to pay mutual attention to each other’s face needs. The centrality of the preservation of face needs to Brown and Levinson’s theory means that it does not appear to account for confrontational discourse where not paying attention to the addressee’s face needs and attacking their position is a frequent and expected occurrence.

We do not propose to create a theory of impoliteness parallel to Brown and Levinson’s theory, but we consider impoliteness as part of the overall concept of politeness. By adding the notion of impoliteness we move away from a search for politeness universals to an examination of context-specific theory of politeness where the participants themselves define what is polite and impolite behaviour against the norms they have for specific communities in which their discourse practices take place. Incorporating the notion of impoliteness into the politeness theory enables us to explain the occurrence of slang and insults in the Shona address system.

¹⁶ However, it appears that by conceptualising face redress and face threatening acts, Brown and Levinson’s theory seems to be capable of accounting for impoliteness. The theory implies that if a speaker aims at conflict, then he/she would avoid using redressive strategies and instead use bald on-record strategies.

3.2 Methodology

This study used five methods for obtaining data: ethnographic observation, semistructured interviews (both individual and group), casual conversations, tape recording and transcription of conversations, and introspection. Many researchers commend observation and interviewing as complementary and best methods of collecting sociolinguistic data (Dickey 1996, Fitch 1998, Eckert 2000, Winchitz 2001, Saville-Troike 2003). We therefore, used these two as the key instruments for collecting the range of personal address and reference terms Shona speakers use in particular situations and relationships, their patterns, social meanings, the interlocutors' intent and the cultural premise relevant for constructing, maintaining, and transforming relationships. But, if used alone, observation and interviewing have serious limitations (Eckert 2000: 74). Thus, bringing in the other three methods provides a reliable sample of address and reference terms speakers use in a variety of situations with all possible combinations of speakers and addressees in terms of age, sex, social class, and other variables.

3.2.1 *Ethnographic observation*

Field notes from participant observation in both public (and semi-public) and private settings were systematically recorded. The notes helped us to make sense of, as well as compare and contrast, the information collected through interviews. Setting in this study means the general cultural activities limited by time and place. The public and semi-public settings were divided into two: those involving "gate-keeping encounters" (Placencia 2001: 201, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 74), and those that are open. Private settings also involve "gate-keeping encounters" in the sense that

access is normally restricted and it is normally by membership, invitation or prior arrangement¹⁷. For settings involving some kind of controlled entry or access, permission was sought from the relevant authorities to observe and record interactions.

Open public places are likely to provide conditions favourable to observing and recording a large amount of naturally occurring data with as little interference from the gatherer as possible in the situation. We engaged and trained four student research assistants, two male and two female to assist in the collection of data. Besides speeding up the process, the research assistants would be able to collect data in settings inaccessible to the researcher. For, example, the female assistants would, among other things, gather data from gatherings and activities that tend to be closed to male participants or observers.

We spent time wandering in street markets, bus termini, parks, shopping malls and shops, restaurants, play grounds – places frequented by many people on a daily basis. Here we assumed the role of passive participants and try to be as unobtrusive as possible. Where necessary, we engaged in casual conversations (since it is normal to engage in unsolicited conversation in public places among black Zimbabweans). Casual conversations enabled the researcher to assume different conversational roles: an addressee, an over-hearer, or even an eavesdropper (Bell 1984) as conversations among community members go on around him.

¹⁷ We are referring to interactive encounters which take place between institutional representatives, such as security guards, touts, etc., and members of the public requiring a service. In such 'brief' encounters between strangers, one has "the authority to make decisions that affect the other's future" (Erickson and Schultz 1982: xi).

While it is easy for a researcher to collect data in open public places inconspicuously and with minimum observer related effects, the same is hard if not impossible to sustain in semi-public and private settings that often involve tight-knit local communities or in-group interactions. In that case, the network method, a widely and successfully used means of mapping [kinship and friendship] ties in urban and rural areas (e.g., Barnes 1954, Hymes 1972, Labov 1972, Boissevain 1974, Milroy 1987, Milroy and Milroy 1985b, Diamond 1996 and Fitch 1998), was employed to select settings and gain access to these settings.

A network charts the various kinds of ties that an individual has to others. This seems to be an ideal method in cities such as Harare since many people tend to belong to and maintain their membership of loosely or densely knit groups such as families, friendships, cliques, churches, clubs, schools, work shifts, local industries and cooperatives, among others. Bott's (1971), Labov's (1972) and Milroy and Milroy's (1985) reported that the network method proved a very effective tool for working class urban communities characterised by dense overlapping kin and friendship ties. Mashiri's (2004) study on the social meaning of kinship terms of address among Harare Shona speakers revealed similar overlapping ties. Characteristically, in Harare's working class suburbs houses are built close to each other, there are neighbourhood schools, churches and informal industries. In addition, there is a good deal of activity in the neighbourhood. Children play in the streets, teenagers frequent certain stores or street corners, and adults visit each other frequently and informally.

People in neighbourhood networks may also belong to different clusters, depending on their church membership, kinship, occupation, acquaintances, and so forth. Hence,

as Boissevain (1974) notes, people in clusters may be closely linked than they are with the rest of the network. Observing people interacting in clusters or networks does not only make it easier to find out who talks to whom, when and how, but also to uncover the indigenous meanings (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995: 12) of address and reference terms. When using participant observation, then, the ethnographer's goal is "ultimately to get close to those studied as a way of understanding what their experiences are and activities mean to them" (12).

Participant observation often gets affected by what Labov (1972) called the "observer's paradox." Adopting the network method resolves the observer's paradox by using "self-recruitment" (Blom and Gumperz 1972: 426). Self-recruitment in the present study involved identifying acquaintances, members of various clusters or networks in the inner city, selected high-density and low-density areas, as 'link' contacts. These introduced the researcher to their groups or communities as a "friend of a friend" (Boissevain (1974) or relative of a relative, collecting data for a book on urban language and culture. No mention was made specifically to the use of personal address and reference terms.

It was assumed that being introduced as such would resolve the observer's paradox in two ways. First, the researcher would be admitted into the respective groups, secondarily as a researcher and primarily, as an insider. Hence, speakers might not be too tape recorder-conscious and adjust their speech behaviour. Second, as Milroy (1987) observed in the Belfast study, the researcher is guaranteed "good faith and is rapidly enmeshed in the rights and obligations relations of the network" (54). The rights and obligations may range from being allowed to witness in-group activities

such as family dispute management to assisting with transport on routine chores. The researcher would obviously take any of these as opportunities for data collection.

3.2.2 *Interviewing*

To complement the corpus of natural data, “reflexive interviewing” rather than “standard interviewing” (Hammerley and Atkinson 1995: 152) was conducted. In reflexive interviewing, the ethnographer usually enters the interview with a list of particular issues s/he wishes to cover and adopts “a more flexible approach, allowing discussion to flow in a way that seems natural” (152). Specifically, this means that the ethnographer will not necessarily ask each interviewee the same questions and will not follow any fixed order of topics (Winchitz 2001: 342). Thus, the goal is to discover participants’ understandings and to probe local categories of address and reference terms and social meanings. This is in line with Eckert’s (2000: 69) suggestion that, “rather than testing hypotheses against predetermined categories, ethnography is, among other things, a search for local categories.”

The use of interviews for investigating phenomena such as social meanings is often criticised for providing “flawed cues to the system, best ignored or discarded in favour of other forms of evidence” (Hanks 1993: 129). Other scholars put the point more forcefully: “the method of collecting sociolinguistic data by means of formal, scheduled interview is at best inadequate and at worst counterproductive” (Wolfson 1976: 202). Yet, as Hanks argues,

If we assume an objectivist stance towards verbal interaction, then native views can never provide more than a deflected representation of the system. If, on the other hand, we

assume an interpretive [qualitative] stance, ...
then we would expect native talk about talk to
reveal principles and schematic resources at
play in a wide variety of contexts (130).

As Mashiri (2004) shows of Shona speakers in Harare, native speakers do have relatively systematic ideas about the way they use language and the social meanings they express through the language. By using the interviewing method, we hope to get at “direct evidence of [Shona speakers’] interpretive frames” (Hanks, 129).

With the help of research assistants and link contacts used at the participant observation stage, we recruited participants from among the personal relationship networks identified and used as the basis of gaining access to varied sub-groups during observation. This technique guaranteed a representative selection of participants in terms of personal relationships such as friendships, family, work relationships, among others, and demographic variables.

Following Mashiri’s (2004) observation that age seems to be the most important demographic variable in determining address behaviour among the Shona, the age ranges of the participants will be 5-70 years of age, with a median of 30. The actual number of interviewees to be drawn from each network and the total number interviewed was determined by the “saturation point” of each address or reference category (Glaser 1978: 124-126, Glaser and Strauss 1967: 61-62, 111-112). This means until (a) no new or relevant data seems to emerge regarding a category, (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and (c) the relationships among the categories are well established and well validated (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 212).

Interviews were useful for obtaining the participants' demographic details, establish their beliefs of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of particular address or reference forms in specific relationships and situations, and instances of address conflict. As an alternative line of questioning, we asked for stories of situations in which participants had, at one time or another, experienced being addressed by another interlocutor with a term they were not expecting and what social meanings they deduced from the address form used. Once an interviewee began to recount these mentioned situations, we probed with questions that are expected to ultimately guide her/him to express the particular social meanings that s/he attributes to the linguistic choice of her/himself or others. The purpose of the probing questions was "to use only those terms [and meanings] actually spoken by the participants as much as possible," (Winchitz 2001: 343) without forcing any predetermined terms or meanings on them. Stories supplement other forms of questioning in that asking participants to recount address situations provide them with a helpful theme to guide their discussion of the topic.

Braun, who collected almost all of her data through interviews, concludes, "The great disadvantage of this method ... is the fact that the data are not natural. They are, at best, a true picture of the informants' awareness, but not a reliable picture of address reality ..." (1988: 310). Braun's criticism raises the question of what Saville-Troike (1982) calls "the distinction between the ideal and the real" (120). This distinction can only be made through introspection by a researcher who is a member of the same speech community s/he is studying.

3.2.3 *Introspection*

Scholars who have criticised the use of introspection as a method of data collection assumed that the linguist would be a foreigner. Dickey (1996) says, "... only the boldest of linguists would attempt to draw conclusions from their intuitions about languages of which they were not native speakers ..." (34). Membership of the community is useful since, "in order to interpret what he hears, the investigator must have some background knowledge of the local culture and of the processes which generate social meaning" (Blom and Gumperz 1972: 434). Saville-Troike also notes that, "introspection is a means of data collection only about one's own speech community," (1982: 119) but cautions that still, "it is important to check hypotheses developed on the basis of their own perceptions with the perceptions of others, and against objective data collected in systematic observation" (121).

Introspection was used in this study only as a supplementary method to observation and interviewing for three main purposes: to distinguish between ideal and real address or reference usage and cultural norms, to infer cultural premises of address or reference term use and social meanings from metacommunication about these meanings of language use and particular instances of it, and to judge the reliability and validity of the interview data. The reliability of my judgement as much as the validity would not be doubted given my extensive knowledge of the community. If validity is taken to imply a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the point of view of someone who lives it everyday, then this is quite easy to prove, as the present researcher is a native speaker of Shona.

3.3 *Data analysis*

After obtaining the interview data, all interviews were fully transcribed with focus on content and those interviews held in Shona translated to English for the identification of categories. Since one of the objectives of this study is to examine the social meanings of personal address and reference terms, the transcription technique employed allowed for details such as verbal fillers, and overlaps to be recorded, but details such as pause length, in and out of breaths, and so forth, were not captured. Each line of the transcription was numbered so that it will be possible to trace and extract terms of address or references or words/phrases expressing social meaning from the interview data.

The data gathered using the methods described above was analysed from a qualitative point of view. Data analysis followed Hymes's (1962, 1972) theoretical framework. More concretely, Spradley's (1979, 1980) developmental research sequence was the basis of the principle analytic moves in each case: (1) categorised patterns of terms of address and reference; (2) identified exceptions in common patterns of use; (3) collected native terms that categorise address or reference terms and social meanings; and (4) pinpointed cultural premises about the kinds of usages, the kinds of persons, or the kinds of states of relationships that are revealed in or inferable from interaction.

3.4 **Summary**

In this chapter we outlined the theoretical framework and the methodology that we adopt. With regards the theoretical framework, we defined and explained the key tenets of Hymes's Ethnography of Communication (EC) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness models relevant to this dissertation.

We adopt the EC as the main theory because of its emphasis on locally managed systems of speaking and their meanings to the people who use them. Central to the EC is the view of culture as a system of symbols and meanings and focus on how interlocutors express and enact the system through ways of speaking. Hence, the connection between talk and culture is essential for the interpretation of social meanings of the address and reference terms. Carbaugh, Fitch and Philipsen's views on the EC and its suitability as a tool for cultural-specific linguistic behaviour are cited with an intention to foreground the significance of the interpretive approach central to the EC.

We outlined the main tenets Brown and Levinson's "face management" politeness theory, the interdependence of politeness and address systems, and the theory's potential to assume various local significations depending on the particular setting in which it is enacted since it essentially derives from a Western cultural perspective. We also suggested modification to Brown and Levinson's model to cater for impoliteness in address or reference behaviour.

We stated our preference for the qualitative approach and outlined the five research methods used to obtain data for this dissertation: ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, tape recording and transcription of conversations and introspection. We demonstrated their connection with the theoretical framework and their relevance for research carried by a native speaker of Shona (an insider).

CHAPTER 4

NON-PROTOTYPICAL USES OF PRONOUNS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the pragmatic significance of Shona pronouns and their agreement concords by examining cases of their alternation and variation in address and reference to convey social meanings. We regard agreement concords, both prefixal and infixal, as pro-forms. The term pro-form is used in some models of grammatical description “to refer collectively to the items in a sentence which substitute for other items or constructions” (Crystal 1991: 280). When Shona pronouns occur as overt or covert subjects or objects in sentences they can be referred to or occur in co-reference to agreement concords (ACs) such as subject and object concords.

Unlike English, Shona does not always demand overt subjects or objects, whether pronominal or nominal. Only a verb is required, and “in the case of third person subjects, the use of a noun is only mandated when introducing a noun into discourse” (Erickson 1988: 129). In Shona the overt use of pronominal forms in the subject slot is highly marked for contrast and emphasis, as in example 1(a) and (b):

1. (a) **Ini** ndiri mukomana, **iwe** uri musikana.
(I am a boy and you are a girl.)
- (b) **Imi**, ndimi baba vedu.
(You are our father.)

The unmarked case is where the subject pronoun is not lexically specified in the ‘surface structure’ (Dembetembe 1976: 227), but is always predictable from its class feature or agreement concord copied onto the verb. Dembetembe (1976: 13) explains that if there is concordial agreement between a noun phrase (noun or pronoun) and a predicate, that noun phrase is functioning as a subject. In other words, “if a noun phrase has its class feature copied onto the auxiliary in the structural change of the Gender copying rule, that noun phrase is in the subject position” (Dembetembe 1976: 227). Examples 2 (a) and (b) show unmarked cases:

2. (a) **Ndakuona** kuchikoro.
 (I saw you at school.)
- (b) **Wati chii?**
 (What did you say?)

The term pronoun and derived terms such as pronominalisation have long been part of the descriptive jargon of traditional grammarians. “The term has been used in the grammatical classifications of words to refer to a closed set of [nominal] lexical items that can substitute for a noun or noun phrase” (Muhlhausler and Harre 1990: 9). Thus, The notion of ‘closed set’ implies that in human languages only a small, definite repertoire of pronoun forms is found in each case. However, such sets differ enormously in complexity and range of discrimination.

There are languages with a mere handful of pronouns and others with “as many as 200” (Muhlhausler and Harre 1990: 9). Most Shona grammarians restrict the label pronoun to the prototypical members of the class, that is, absolute pronouns. As Fortune (1955: 133) observes, “the absolute pronoun is that type of pronoun which

does nothing more than indicate a certain thing of collection of things.” Prototypical members of a category are the central members of that category.

Proponents of the prototypical model (e.g. Taylor 1989, Spencer 1991) however, argue that membership of categories is in most cases matters of degrees. Hence, there is some gradience from the prototypes to the less central members of a category. This means that there are no clear-cut boundaries from one category to another. We adopt this view by including what Shona grammarians normally call demonstratives, as pronouns. We note that some nominals, in particular, the noun *munhu* (a person) and the enumerative *-mwe* (some/certain) function as pronouns or appear with the third person pronoun to express indefinite reference (at least in our data). Personal pronouns include their possessive prononinal stems.

In summary, we make reference to personal pronouns: absolute, possessive, demonstrative, and indefinite appearing overtly or covertly in utterances. Where they appear covertly, the concords that refer to them are highlighted. Table 1, therefore shows Shona personal pronouns, singular and plural, (referrrd to above) and the agreement concords used with different verb tenses.

Table 1: Shona pronouns, proforms and agreement concords

		Singular						Plural		
Per	Pron	Poss	Demon	AC Pres/Fut	AC Past	Pron	Poss	Demon	AC Pres/Fut	AC Past
1st	Ini	-ngu	-	ndi-	nd-	isu	-idu	-	ti-	t-
2nd	Iwe	-ko	-	u-	w-	Imi	inyu	-	u-	m-
3rd	Iye	-ke	uyu/uyo	a-	a-	Ivo	-vo	ava/avo	va-	v-

Several linguists emphasise the syntactic function and status of the pronoun in a noun phrase or in a sentence. Leech and Svartvik's (1975: 275) define pronouns as "words that can function as a whole noun phrase (e.g. in being subject or object of a clause) or as the head of a noun phrase. Many of them act as substitutes or 'replacements' for noun phrases in the context." The process of substitution referred to in Leech and Svartvik's definition is pronominalisation. Many linguists perceive pronominalisation as a mechanical process used in producing mere surface variants of underlying structures. Hence, in the original Chomskian version of transformational grammar pronouns were not located in the deep structure, but introduced transformationally.

Semantically, traditional grammarians assert that pronouns provide information about "who is speaking and who is listening" (Grimes 1975: 71), and about whom or what they are speaking. Leech and Svartvik (1975: 57) define the pronoun *we*, for example: "*we* stands for a group of people including the speaker." This definition implies that *we* has the same reference in every context. This is a kind of one morpheme equals one meaning principle. The syntactic and semantic conceptualisation of the pronoun that we have outlined represents its prototypical use.

In this chapter our concern is, the often neglected, non-prototypical use of Shona pronouns. We shall illustrate how, pragmatically, Shona pronouns, like pronouns in other languages, perform diverse roles and functions depending on the communicational contexts in which they are used. Reichenbach (1966) remarks that pronouns are pointers of variables that perform two basic functions: anaphoric and deictic. Duranti (1984) adds that in addition to looking at their referential functions,

linguists should also look at the work pronouns do in defining the role of a given character in a story, as well as judgements. Specifically he argues that Italian subject pronouns are devices through which speakers define main characters in a narrative and/or convey empathy or positive affect towards certain referents. Speakers/Authors, on the other hand, use demonstratives to define inanimate objects, minor characters, and people with whom they show no empathy.

We shall also show how Shona interactants sometimes use pronouns to index referents that differ from the person conventionally associated with a particular form. Kahananui and Anthony (1970), Wills (1977) and Head (1978) discussed the use of one pronoun to index another (for example, using the first person to mean the second person) when referring to or addressing someone. Kahananui and Anthony, for example, argue that the use of the first person dual inclusive in Hawaiian is considered a polite form of address for greeting an individual. For his part, Head (1978: 172) notes that the use of the first person plural to refer exclusively to the referent to show similarity of interests with the referent is found in several languages, including English, German, Swedish, Danish and French.

We demonstrate for Shona, as Obeng (1997) does for Akan, that the use of pronouns in conversation often violates certain grammatical [syntactic] rules and involve changing and shifting the prototypical meaning of the pronouns. This change or shift in reference is in part attributable to sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors, which formal grammar tends to rule out.

The data from the present survey show that the simplicity of the grammatical pronominal paradigms hides the complexity of their use and undervalues the pronouns' pragmatic import. We shall make further comments on the limits of a grammatical approach as part of the evaluation after analysing specific instances of pronoun use captured in the data surveyed in this study. Recently, however, pragmatic consideration of the way in which European, especially English pronouns are actually used in context "indicates that pronouns are far from categorical, and indeed, their interpretation is mediated by a range of social and personal factors producing a range of possible uses and interpretations" (Wilson 1990: 45). Much of the recent work has been influenced by the important early study by Brown and Gilman (1960), who surveyed pronominal address in several languages, principally French, German and Italian.

We offered the details of Brown and Gilman's model in Chapter two, where we noted that in spite of its narrow scope Brown and Gilman's study proved an exemplary analysis, with implications for "many other semiotic codes" (Hodge and Kress 1988: 40). Other linguists, of course, studied systems of pronouns, following Brown and Gilman's parsimonious model, but they treated the context of their use and their pragmatic function as secondary.

The context of pronominal usage that both grammatical pronominal paradigms and the Brown and Gilman based studies undervalue involves conversations. Shona conversationalists use several devices to define characters or participants in an ongoing conversation. Among these discourse tools are the use of pronouns. As we noted in Chapter One, and as the data surveyed for this study will show, conversations

are “populated with a cast of actors, present and absent, whose explicit characterisations and implicit known identities give shape and meaning to the talk” (Malone 1997: 43). In a study of conversations among members of a food cooperative, Labov (1980), (cited in Malone, 1997: 43) argued that collections or categories of people are often indexed in implicit ways by references to group membership, past activities or characterisations, times or places, or plurals hidden in singulars.

Given the potential complexity of interactional reference alluded to above, how do conversationalists know or think they know to whom reference is being made? Speakers and hearers seem in most cases to know who is being spoken to or about and are able to get on with their conversations without frequent need for clarification. Proponents of the conversational analysis approach (CA) would argue that “this knowledge is neither the result of some external institutional order which provides rules to follow (Wilson 1991: 27, cited in Malone 1997: 43), nor does it result from a cognitive model possessed by each talker. It is the interaction order with its concomitant demands of self-presentation and sense-making that provides a framework within which such practical knowledge is possible.

Contrary to CA analysts, our data will show that “the institutional external order”, the culture of the society in which the interactants are members, sometimes constrain the speaker’s choice and use of pronoun in a conversation. As Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom (2002) show of Shona and Obeng (1997) of Akan, some interactive rules or conditions (e.g. in African societies) may require the use of indirect or ambiguous reference. The participants’ shared or assumed knowledge: “unspoken and unstressed” (Ellis 1992) also determine pronominal use. Obeng sums it up: “Use of

indirectness, as well as the mechanism for understanding indirect speech acts, depends in part on mutually shared background information and on the cultural background of the discourse participants.

4.2 Specifics of pronoun use

Before examining the non-conventional or non-prototypical uses of Shona pronouns and the social meaning deriving from these uses, we shall provide examples showing how ordinary pronouns work. In other words, we will give examples of pronouns serving their expected functions in addition to examples 1 and 2 above. Consider 3 and 4:

3. Martin: **Ini ndinoda mukadzi anosevenza.**
 (I prefer a woman who is formally employed.)
 Tariro: **Unoda iye here kana kuti unoda mari yake?**
 (Do you love a woman as an individual or you love her for her money?)

4. Vanhu vomuno muZimbabwe **vane tsika chaizvo. Hatina basa neMother's day** nokuti **tinoda vanamai vedu nguva dzose. Tine zviyerwa zvinotirambidza** kuvarova kana kuvatuka.
 (We Zimbabwean are very courteous people. We do not value Mother's day since we show love to our mothers all the time. In our culture there are taboos that discourage beating or scolding one's mother.)

In (3), Martin, age 21, and Tariro, age 20, Catholic University in Zimbabwe students engage in a social discussion in a literature class. In Martin's utterance, the pronoun *Ini* (I) refers to the first person singular, the speaker and it functions as the subject of the sentence. The *u-* (you) in the string "*Unoda iye here kana kuti unoda mari yake*" (Do you love the woman as an individual or you love her for her money?) also functions as the subject of the sentence, but *iye* (she), the third person singular pronoun functions as the object of the sentence and determines the possessive stem of the modifier of the noun *mari* (money) in the object noun phrase *mari yake* (her money). In other words, the pronouns in the utterances in example (3) perform their conventional functions.

Example (4) is part of an interview on general cultural issues that the researcher had with Jonathan, age 45, and high school teacher. In 4 the third person subject concord *va-* (they) refers (back) to the noun phrase *Vanhu vomuno muZimbabwe* (Zimbabweans) which, functions as the subject of the sentence. The subject concord *ti-* (we) in "*Hatina basa...*" (We do not value...) also performs its normal or conventional function – inclusive first person plural pronoun. Although there is an intersentential pronominal switch from third to first person in (4), this appears to be a typical switch that does not interfere with the ordinary/referential meanings of the respective pronouns.

The object of the remaining part of this chapter is a discussion of interactants' use of pronouns to index referents that differ from the person typically associated with a particular form and connote contextually determined social meanings.

4.2.1 First person reference

In this section, we shall examine how the first person singular and plural Shona pronouns derive multiple meanings from the contexts of their use. Malone (1997: 58) stresses the interdependence of meaning and situation: “the indexicality of talk, its unalterable connectedness to a particular situation, is played out in pronoun choices which create alignments between talkers and their topics and their hearers. This implies that the relationship between the speaker and the hearer(s), the topic and the situation of talk, among other things, are significant in the understanding of a pronoun’s social or pragmatic meaning.

4.2.1.1 *First person singular*

In traditional grammar, the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ only refers to the person who uses it, the speaker. The data surveyed in this study shows the complexities of pronoun use in conversations. Consider:

5. Ndiri kuda ma**assignments** **angu** nhasi
nokuti ndinoda kuamaka pa**week-end**.
(Please hand in my [= ‘your’]
assignments today so that I can mark
them over the week-end.)
6. Hapana zv**and**ichagona kuita **ndega**
ipapa. **Ndikawana and**isimudzawo
ak**andi**isa pamushana ndizvozvo.
Upenyu hwakaona mukwasha!
(I am [= ‘She’] now bed-ridden. I now
rely on the good will of others for
taking me out to enjoy the sun and
back into the house.)
7. 1. Zvinhu zvakaoma mazuva ano.
Zvako zvokuswera uchiti,

2. 'Handidyi manhuchu **ini**,' he-e,
"handidye chingwa chisina
bhata," wotozvirega.
3. Ini handichazvikwanisa zvokuti
chingwa mangwana mangwana.
4. Kamwe chete pasvondo kana
tazvigonawo tazvigona.
(The cost of living is now very
high. Your petty excuses that "I
[= 'you'] don't like *manhuchu*
and I also dislike bread without
butter," have got to stop. I can't
afford to buy bread every day
anymore. Once a week is the best
I can do.)

The use of the first person singular pronoun, its subject concord or possessive form in all the three examples above is not self-referential. We recorded example (5) from a high school classroom. This utterance is used by a teacher to direct students to submit their assignments on this particular day without fail. Some students probably attempt to give excuses for not being able to meet the deadline, hence, the teacher uses the first person pronominal possessive stem *ngu-* (mine), to index the second person plural stem *nyu-* (yours), to stress his authority, rights and duties to direct the students' actions and the students' lack of power to dispute the command.

This is so since in African [Shona] culture, the teacher-student relationship is an asymmetrical one; the teacher is older and more knowledgeable than the students. The teacher is expected to be in control, to preserve an appropriate distance from students, and to instruct and inform the students (Holmes 1983: 97). In fact, the surface structure of the utterance that the teacher uses conforms to the form akin to a type of

English directives that Ervin-Tripp (1976: 29) calls “personal need or desire statements” directed down-wards to subordinates primarily. Such directives start with the phrase, “I need....”. Changing from the prototypical use of second person plural to first person singular is a way of “asserting, maintaining, and perhaps increasing power” (Pearson 1988: 79).

Example (6) is an extract of an interview that the researcher had with Angela, age 36, who is nursing her younger sister suffering from AIDS. Since Angela narrates her sister’s ordeal to the researcher with the sister as a co-present referent, she employs what Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom (2002: 228) refer to as “pronoun substitution or pronoun mismatches,” to save face¹⁸ in a face-threatening situation. The speaker uses the first person singular subject concord */ndi-/* ‘I’ to refer to the third person (her sister, in this case), while ostensibly referring to herself.

The utterance in example (7) is one of several instances of such utterances observed in conversations involving varied and mixed interlocutors where the speaker uses the first person pronoun or its subject concord */ndi-/* (lines 1 and 2) to refer to the hearer. Urban (1989), cited in Malone 1997: 63), calls a pronoun used in direct [and indirect] quotation, as in 7 (2) above, quotative “I”. The quotative “I” in example 7 takes the form of what Goffman (1974: 534) calls “say-fors” or mimicry. In this case the

¹⁸ Pronominal substitution is one of several and varied “off-record” linguistic politeness strategies (Pan 1995: 465) that are used in different cultures to save face. Brown and Levinson’s (1978) and Goffman’s (1967) notion of face refers to “the public self-image that people want to claim for themselves” (Chen 1991: 113) in interaction. Face is something that must be constantly attended to in social interaction, since it can be lost, maintained, or enhanced. Details of what face involves is given in chapter three of this study. However, being ‘off-record’ in the case of the utterance in example 2 implies that the speaker used pronouns stylistically to avoid embarrassing and hurting the referent. The ambiguity or implicitness created by this strategy provides a high disclaimer of performance. When words attract a high disclaimer of performance it means that a speaker can use them with immunity or impunity in potentially threatening situations such as the one involving someone living with HIV/AIDS.

speaker is “saying-for” or acting out as the hearer or addressee, in a mannered voice, as in ‘*Handidyi manhuchu ini*’, where the speaker mimics the second person, the true referent of *ini*.

The use of the auxiliary verb /*ti-*/ (say), in line 1, before the quotation syntactically marks the boundary between reference to the speaker and reference to the hearer between what the speaker says and what the hearer said. It introduces an embedded quote in which the speaker is mimicking another person. The prosodic markers such as “*he-e*” (what-not), (line 2) clearly reveals who is speaking. The use of this prosodic marker shows change from a normal to a marked voice quality to indicate that a different person is doing the speaking. In the present example, as in many others, syntactic and prosodic devices are used simultaneously. The pragmatic meaning implied in the use of the quotative “I”, in example (7) is sarcasm and caricature. In this case the speaker derides the hearer’s behaviour with an intention to influence behavioural change. While the first person pronoun used in 7 refers to the second person, there are cases in the data surveyed where it may refer to the third person singular. Instances where quotative “we” is used are illustrated in the next section.

The use of the first person singular, then, in interaction makes it referentially more complex than the self-referentiality, which the grammatical paradigm suggests. It becomes a resource that speakers can use to do a variety of interactional work, including dramatising others’ *personae* by imitating their voice.

4.2.1.2 *First Person Plural*

As in the previous section, our concern in this section is the speakers' manipulation of pronouns, in this case the first person plural, within various social contexts. We are interested in the speakers' selectional choices in referring to themselves and others and the distributional range of the first person plural pronoun. Our assumption is that the individual choices and the distributional range of pronouns may indicate how they treat the meaning of the first person plural pronoun in each context of use. In other words "the proportional use of certain pronouns may itself affect the interpretation (meaning) of certain pronouns for certain speakers" (Wilson 1990: 56).

Table 1 shows that the Shona first-person plural pronoun is *Isu* (we). This, like all the other pronouns in Shona, as in other languages, occurs in a sentence or in discourse as noun phrase (NP). Dembetembe (1987: 82-97) provides an elaborate analysis of the structural features and grammatical functions of the Shona NP, including the pronoun. This however, has no immediate relevance to the present study. Suffice to say that Hartmann and Stork (1972: 155) defines an NP as "a word or a group of words with a noun or pronoun as its head and functioning as the subject, object or complement of a sentence." We have already noted that when a pronoun appears in a sentence, overtly or covertly, as subject, it is followed or substituted by a pronominal subject concord that varies according to the tense of the verb (see table 1, above) and by an object concord, when it functions as an object.

The data surveyed in this study shows that the Shona first person plural pronoun has a wide range of non-conventional referencing possibilities within everyday talk. Before we illustrate the patterns of choices and use and the social meanings implied in the

However, discussing instances of pronominal use similar to 8(a), Mashiri (2003a: 122) stresses that the use of the exclusive *ti-* gives the addressee(s) an impression of the speaker's inclusion in the action ensuing from the directive. This means that the directive is perceived as a face-threatening action (FTA) that requires the use of some mitigating device. In fact, in 8(a) the mitigation is emphasised by adding the accounting statement, "*tiri muimba yaMwari*," hence, shifting the real author (speaker) of the directive to God. Mitigation is also evident in the speaker's preference to using the hortative formative *nga-* (let) followed by *ti-* to the direct imperative form, *Nyararai* (Be quiet please.). The context forces the minister to employ the exclusive pronoun with mitigating devices in order to manage the addressees' emotions. The speaker's identity as a religious leader, the church setting that demands piety and egalitarianism, and the cultural rules of respect determine the minister's pronominal choice.

Now let us take 8(b) where Jerry and Seti discuss a politician's speech broadcast on television. In this case it is clear that *ti-* (in boldface) refers to both the speaker and the addressee, thus it is inclusive. The *ti-* in this case refers to Jerry and Seti's shared situation at the moment of making the utterance. When Seti uses *ti-*, he assumes that he is speaking for Jerry as well. However, Seti's use of *isu* (*vamwe*) in the second line shows a referential shift in the same utterance. At this stage Seti no longer speaks for Jerry, but includes some unspecified others. Thus, the *isu* creates and calls attention to a new identity boundary. Commenting on the use of the American English *we*, Malone (1997: 65) says, "*We* has shifting sets of referents of greater or lesser inclusiveness, and is a prime example of one of the ways speakers can shift their

‘footings,’ creating new alignments with others, in the course of very brief stretches of talk.”

Although the pronoun *isu* in 8(b) could refer to Rungano and the unspecified others, we observed from other contexts that the first person plural pronoun, when used this way could also be self-referential. In this case, the first person plural stands for the first person singular pronoun as in the example (9) below:

9. Mandisa: Mune chokutaura here panyaya
 iyi mukoma?
 (Would you have anything to
 say on this issue brother?)
- Mutape: **Isu** vamwe hatipo panyaya
 dzenyu. Itai zvamafunga.
 (Do not drag us (= ‘me’) in
 your mess. Do as you please.)
- Mandisa: Hazvinzarwo mukoma! Chivi
 hachidzoreranwi.
 (Calm down brother! Two
 wrongs cannot make a right.)
- Mutape: **Tisiye zvedu!**
 (We (= ‘I’) have no interest
 meddling in your affairs.)

The form of first-person plural that Mutape uses approximates what Head (1978: 165) calls the “plural of modesty”. Like Head’s ‘plural of modesty’, the effect of using *isu/ti-* (we) is one of disassociation with a certain idea, position or affiliation and to index a negative emotional disposition. Notwithstanding that there are also examples in the data, which reflect the social meaning of associating oneself or aligning with a certain idea, view or way of behaviour.

We also observed that some speakers employ the first-person plural pronoun to refer to themselves when they relate general experiences that in fact apply to them personally. We observed such usages in social conversations involving mixed groups of workmates in terms of age, sex and rank, often held during lunch breaks in the industrial sites. Example (10) constitutes Beauty's, age 29, contribution to one such discussion:

10. **Isu** madzimai **tinoonekwa**
 setisina kuzvibata nguva dzose.
 Ukangosekererana
 nemunhurume zvonzi wava
 kutodanana naye. Munhu
 anogona kutorambirwa
 izvozvo.
 (We (= 'I') women are always
 viewed as people of loose
 morals. Any friendly
 interaction with a man is
 misconstrued as an illicit
 relationship. Some men divorce
 their wives on such
 allegations.)

A follow up interview with Beauty established that she herself is, in fact, estranged from her husband because of suspicions of infidelity. Nevertheless, the discourse style represented in 10 is not unique to the speaker in this particular conversation. In 10 the speaker relates her own experience in an indirect way. By using the first-person plural pronoun, she assimilates herself to a much wider class of women (who become victims of gender stereotyping), downgrading her own experience to incidental status of the discourse, phrasing it as something that could or would be anybody's.

The data surveyed for this study also reveals that at times speakers use the first person plural pronoun in place of the first person singular pronoun to show the relationship between the speaker and the other person (s) implied in the ‘we’:

11. **Isu** hatifungi kuti zvine basa kuendesa mwana kukireshi inotaurwa Chirungu. Tinodada nomutauro wedu. Maattitudes chete ndiwo anonetsa vanhu vatemala.
(We (= ‘I’) do not believe that it’s necessary to send a child to an English speaking crèche. We are proud of our language. In fact, Blacks tend to have an attitudinal problem.)
12. Highlanders takairakasha pahome payo chaipo nezuro.
(We (= ‘they’) thoroughly beat Highlanders at it’s home ground yesterday.)

Example (11) is an extract from a recording of a Christian newly-wed couples group discussion on raising children. The speaker, Richard, age 37, sits with his wife Tendai, age 32 and gives her occasional glances as he speaks. Although Richard gives his own opinion, his *isu* (we) refers to him and Tendai. Hence, the *isu* in Richard’s utterance has an integrative function. According to Weiner and Mehrabian (1968), personal reference is used to establish verbal immediacy, with ‘we’ pronouns showing greater psychological inclusion (or integration of identities) and ‘I/you’ pronouns establishing greater separation of self and other.

Commending on the functions of language in marital relations in Western society Ellis and Hamilton (1985) and Fitzpatrick, Bauman and Lindaas (1987) classify couples, which use *we* pronouns as ‘interdependent,’ stable and homogenous and place high value on togetherness and sharing. Since the present study has not ventured intensely into marital conversations, we do not have enough evidence to assess the

applicability of these observations to the Shona [Africa] context. What cannot be doubted, however is that the use of the first person plural pronoun in such situations as exemplified by (11) above implies the level of intimacy explicated by Ellis and Hamilton's and Fitzpatrick and Lindaas's research.

In example (12), the *ta-* (we) also performs an integrative function, but of a slightly different nature. In this example the first person plural pronoun refers to the third person plural (representing the Highlanders players). By using the *we* pronoun the speaker (the sports fan) shows his commitment to "his" team, although he did not participate in the game personally.

Another example of usage with a similar effect is example (13) below:

13. Svondo rakapera **takadzidza** chii zviya
nezvechirwere chomukondombera?
(What did we (= 'you') learn about
HIV/AIDS last week?)

We recorded example (13) from a junior high school class where a teacher refers to a previous class she gave. The pronoun *we*, in this case represented by the subject concord *ta-* refers to the students and does not include the teacher. By using the pronoun the teacher simply expresses her commitment to the successful instruction of her students.

We also observed how the first person plural pronoun could be used to refer to the second-person singular. Consider examples (14) and (15):

14. Riri sei gumbo **redu** nhasi ambuya?
(How is our (= 'your') leg today
granny?)

15. Ngatidyeika mwanangu. Chidyai
vamwene.
Honai ini ndiri kudya. O-
o, chiti kabu kabuka zimhandara.
(Let us (= 'you') eat my child. Please
eat mother-in-law. See, I am eating.
Look, eat quickly my big girl.)

We observed the use of the first person plural pronoun in 14 by a medical doctor when the present researcher took his maternal grandmother who had fractured her leg for review. This form of pronominal use is an example of the so-called “nursery *we*” (Laberge and Sankoff 1980, Muhlhausler and Harre 1990). Laberge and Sankoff suggest that the ‘nursery *we*’ is used in English when doctors and nurses or other caregivers express their strong commitment to patients or children they are responsible for. However, the data for this study seem to show that besides commitment, the speaker’s use of the pronoun in such instances also connotes compassion and solidarity with the addressee.

The data surveyed for this study reveal that the use of the first-person plural pronoun in address is widespread in forms of language used in speaking to children and babies. This use of the first-person is what Head (1978: 172) calls “baby talk” and is represented in example (15). Head says that in ‘baby talk,’ reference may be either to both the speaker and the addressee, in order to encourage participation by the latter in a mutual activity, or only to the addressee, as a means of showing interest or as an order. This variable range of inclusiveness makes the use of the first person in addressing small children ambiguous.

We observed that Shona speakers use the first-person plural pronoun in addressing small children, whether reference is to both the speaker and the addressee or to only the latter. When referring to both, the speaker and the addressee, the parent or caregiver, acting as the speaker, makes a phony participation in the activity in question only to encourage the child to perform the activity. When Chenai, age 32, directs her daughter to eat her food in example (15), the former takes only two spoons of porridge and let her daughter finish the rest. The address form *mwanangu* (my child), the social honorific *zimhandara* and the relational honorific *vamwene* (mother-in-law) complement the illocutionary force¹⁹ of the pronoun by adding the social meanings of closeness, affection and patronage (Mashiri 2004), resulting in the child eating all her food.

One other use of the first-person plural pronoun similar to the ‘baby talk’ that we observed is when parents, Sunday school teachers and Pre-school teachers order small children, in a polite manner, to stop certain actions:

16. **Hatitambi tichirova vamwe and kana**
 tichida kuenda kutoilet tinokumbira
 kuna auntie.
 (We (= ‘you’) should not beat other
 children. When we (= ‘you’) want to
 visit the toilet, ask the teacher’s
 permission.)

The utterance in 16 is part of a statement that a pre-school teacher for a beginners’ class at a private crèche in Harare gave to the children in her class in 2002. In an interview, the teacher, Tecla, age 39, says that while she made this utterance as part of

¹⁹ This concept is attributable especially, to Austin’s (1962) and Searle’s (1969) Speech Act theory and it is relevant here because of our emphasis on the intentional nature of a communicative activity. Trudgill (2003: 125) defines an illocutionary force of a speech act as “the effect, which a speech act is intended to have by the speaker.”

the routine classroom discipline reminders, she was, in fact, indirectly issuing an order to one particular boy who was in the habit of pinching other children and going to the toilet without asking for permission. We observed that the use of indirect directives typical of 16 is most common with children under the age of six. Tecla notes that a direct, firm and stern-sounding directive could negatively affect the delinquent child both psychologically and socially. The use of the first-person pronoun concords in example (16) is used, first, to deal with a case at hand, but as Torode (1976: 93) reminds us, “this use of *we* is not [only] located within the present situation-at-hand, it is portrayed within a realm whose time-span transcends any particular spatially and temporally bounded occasion.”

Our data also shows how speakers use the first person plural pronoun to indirectly refer to a core-present referent (third person) whom both the speaker and the addressee assume to be a non-speaker of Shona or a passive bilingual. The pronoun is used as a referent term in gossip involving the core-referent. Consider 17:

17. Baba ava vanonetsa. Izvozvi zvatiri ipapa tiri kusapura asi tiri kusapotwa neUN. Basa nderokungosweroteedza ndari yemuZimbabwe.
(My friend, this is a problem student. Currently, we (= ‘he’) are due to write supplementary examinations, despite that we get full funding from the United Nations. How could he do well when he spends time boozing in Zimbabwean bars?)

Example (17) features James, age 38, a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe who narrates a foreign student’s academic problems and social behaviour to the researcher. The use of the first person plural pronoun in 17 is exactly the same as that of its

singular form in example 6 which we noted as an instance of pronoun substitution or mismatch. The figurative nature of this discourse style makes the utterance in 17 inaccessible to non-native speakers of Shona. This style enables the speaker and the addressee to exclude the co-present referents from the discussion and to gossip about or insult them freely. In 17, the reference term *baba* (father), modified by the demonstrative *ava* (this), reflects a derogatory tone that connotes the referent's immature and irresponsible behaviour contrary, to that expected of a father-figure denoted by the noun *baba*.

Lastly, we observed Shona speakers' non-self-referential use of the first person plural pronoun in narratives or utterances that involve direct or indirect quotation similar to the use of the first-person singular pronoun illustrated in example (7). The quotative *we* may refer to more than one addressee (numerical plural), the addressee and unspecified others associated with him/her, the addressee alone or overhearers who have no association with the addressee. This ambiguity could be detected from example (18):

18. Imi vanaChamu munoswera
 muchizviti 'Tiri mawar vet, tiri mawar
 vet,' yet ndimi maiva vanamujibha.
 Pamwe pakarwiwa hondo yacho maiva
 musati mambozvarwa futi!
 (People like you Chamu who go
 around saying, 'We (= 'you') are
 veterans of the war of liberation, we
 are veterans of the war,' were probably
 just war collaborators. It's also
 possible that the war was fought before
 you were born.)

Besides the deriding and sarcastic tone of the mimicry, the referent ambiguity in the quotation makes it possible for the speaker to attack overhearers who would not be

ratified addressees. In the case of example (18), Gerald, age 41, makes these comments to Chamu, age 37, in a friendly chat at a friend's wedding party attended by members of their social network. The membership of the gathering provides Gerald the licence to speak freely without risking altercation with anyone or being quoted out of context.

4.2.2 Second person pronoun

In ordinary use the second person refers to the person addressed by the speaker. As Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest, when a speaker refers to a hearer as 'you,' that hearer is an 'addressed recipient,' a 'target' of the speaker's words. But, as the data for this study will show, the second person has a wide range of interactional uses that can index alternation of person to convey social meanings. Hence, the data analysed in this section will reveal that the second person pronoun can be used as a marked address pronoun and can be allocated to first, third person, as well as the more generic second person.

4.2.2.1 Use of the second person as a marked address pronoun

Shona grammar books meant for various purposes and readers/learners (e.g. Chimhundu and Mashiri 1996, Brauner 1995, Erickson 1988 and Fortune 1980) have described the grammatical functions of the second person pronoun in its unmarked form. Grammatically, says Brauer (1995: 34), the second person singular is usually used for one person and the "second person plural has two functions: address to a majority of persons and honorific plural form for one person." The explanation for this categorisation is sociolinguistic in nature. Both the social distance and the relative social status between interlocutors determine the speaker's choice for either the singular or plural [honorific]. Boxer (1993: 105) writes:

Whereas the relative social status is viewed primarily in a vertical sense of higher or lower status, social distance differs from this concept in that it refers to the horizontal relationship between participants in a speech sequence. While the former has to do with one's social position in a community owing to age, occupation or level of power, the latter has to do with the level of friendship/intimacy between interlocutors. These are two variables having the potential of interacting and/or overriding each other, depending on the context of the interaction.

Some researchers have viewed the social distance scale as a continuum (e.g. Boxer 1993, Holmes 1990, and Wolfson 1988) in line with Wolfson's theory of social distance termed the 'The Bulge'²⁰. In the continuum, we would find complete strangers at one extreme and intimates at the other end, with friend and acquaintances nearer to the middle. "The categories of 'strangers', 'friends', and 'intimates' are not discrete categories but are points along the continuum" (Boxer 1993: 104). Social distance and social status would interact where speakers comply with the Shona rule that a speaker is expected to address a hearer using the second person honorific pronoun if the latter is an acquaintance or a stranger and occupies a higher social status than the former. However, social distance may override social status where the interlocutors are intimates, hence their pronominal choice is determined by contextual variables other than age or other forms of social status.

The data presented here will show that the patterns of language use characterised above disregard the speaker's creative usage and violation of conventional

²⁰ "When we examine the ways in which different speech acts are realised in actual everyday speech, and when we compare these behaviours in terms of the social relationships of the interlocutors, we find again and again that the two extremes of social distance – minimum and maximum – seem to call forth very similar behaviour, while relationships which are more toward the centre show marked difference" (Wolfson 1988: 32).

grammatical or cultural rules in order to achieve social meaning or pragmatic intent. An example of a marked use of the second person singular address pronoun can be seen in the following conversation between an adult married woman aboard a commuter omnibus and a teenage bus conduct:

19. Conductor: Ambuya seberai uko umwe
agare.
(Lady could you please move over to
create room for one other person.)

Woman: (Silence and no movement.)

Conductor: (angrily) **Imi** ambuya **imi** seberai
kuside uko. Maita seiko?
(I am talking to you lady, please
push over that side. Is there a
problem?)

Woman: Ndinosebera kupi kwacho? Iyo *seat*
iyi yakazombogarwa nevanhu *four*
kupi kwacho?
(I do not see any space to push over
to. Isn't it strange that you want the
four of us to sit here?)

Conductor: (Moving closer to the woman) **Iwe**
uri aniko *iwe*? Uri *girlfriend*
yadriver here kana kuti uri hure?
Unoda kushamisira kunge uri
mumota mako sei? Kana
usingakwane buruka tione! Uri
kupedza nguva yedu.
(You, what authority do you have to
challenge me? Are you the driver's
girlfriend or just a prostitute? Why
do you behave so arrogantly as if
you are in the comfort of your
personal car? If you have problems
pushing over, then out you go! You
are wasting our time.)

Woman: (Silence as she gets down).

In his first and second utterances the conductor uses the unmarked forms of address to the adult female stranger. The kin term *ambuya* (mother-in-law) and the second person plural pronoun *imi* (you) express the politeness/respect expected between strangers in service encounters. The shift from the second person plural to the singular pronoun *iwe* (you), and from the kin term of respect to insulting labels, such as *hure* (prostitute) shows the conductor's anger and desire to embarrass the woman for refusing to co-operate with him or comply with the bus rules. The encounter in example (19) is not unique. Similar uses of the second person singular to addressees whom speakers are normally expected to give the honorific (either because the addressees are strangers to or are older than the speaker(s) or both) were observed in other service encounters, especially those involving queues and gate-keeping such as medical health-centres, registry offices, supermarkets, banks, etc.

4.2.2.2 *Use of the second person for reference to the speaker/first person*

In Shona the use of the second person pronoun or its pro-forms to refer to oneself is widespread. Example (20) will help to make this clear.

20. Unodoedzawo kufadza murume asi hapana anokuona. Ndaneta tete. Murume wangu anorova.
(You (= 'I') try everything possible to please your (= my) husband but he does not notice you (= me). I am fed up auntie. My husband is abusive.)

The context captured in example (20) is that of Ruth, age 33, narrating her experiences with her abusive husband to her auntie. In this case it is clear that the second person subject concord *u-* (you) and the object concord *ku-* (you) in "... *anokuona*" are actually intended to refer to the speaker herself. At issue in Ruth's

utterance is her own experience with her abusive husband. But, by using the second person proforms she assimilates herself to a much wider class of women, downgrading her own experience to incidental status in the discourse, phrasing it as something that could be anybody's (Laberge and Sankoff 1980: 281). The pragmatic effect of using the second person pronoun to mean the first person in this case is to evoke sympathy and solidarity and to legitimise the speaker's subsequent action or decisions. While the 'you' in example (20) seems to refer to the speaker only, the one used in example (21) tends to be rather ambiguous. James, age 29, a graduate high school teacher relates his financial situation to the researcher in an interview:

21. Ndiri *graduate teacher* asika **unoshaya**
 mari yerent chaiyo **iwe une degree**
 iroro.
 (I am a graduate teacher yet you (= 'I')
 can not afford to pay my rentals in
 spite of the degree.)

Example (21) shows how a speaker may choose to refer to himself in the second person rather than in the first person. The ambiguity referred to above relates to the possibility of the second person in this example to refer to the speaker only or the speaker and others like him, possibly including the addressee. In this case 'you' has been allocated to first and third person as well as the conventional second person. Support for this position has been implicitly noted in the work of Laberge and Sankoff (1980). The use of 'you' in this case is what Laberge and Sankoff and Wilson (1990) call 'situational insertion' (280). 'Situational insertion' argues Wilson, involves "the conversion of one's own personal experience into experiences which might be, or can be, shared by the addressee" (56). This kind of generalisation has the effects of locating the speaker in a potentially repeatable activity or context (Laberge and Sankoff, 281).

There are also instances where the second person indexes the first person plural. Consider the utterance in example (22) which we recorded from the sentiments of one male member of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) of the University of Zimbabwe to a member of the University Council at a salaries dispute meeting in 2003:

22. It's not like tinoda kuenda *pastrike*.
 The question is *unoita* chii ne\$400
 000,00 mazuva ano? Ukabhadhara *rent*
 nokutenga chikafu, ko *transport*?
 Unopedzesera wakweretaka kuti
uwane mari *yefees* muna *January*!
 (It's not like we want to strike for the
 sake of it. The question is what do you
 (= 'we') buy with Z\$400 000,00 these
 days? You (we) can only pay rent and
 buy some groceries and remain with
 no money for travel expenses. One has
 no option but to borrow money to pay
 children's school fees in January!)

Here *u-* is repeated a number of times and in no case does it seem to legitimately refer to the addressee, the second person singular or plural. Instead, because it refers to the speaker as well as the hearer(s), it seems to mean "all of us". This use of the second person implicitly refers to an indefinite reference.

4.2.2.3 Indefinite second person

Malone (1997: 69) notes that, "when a speaker uses the indefinite second person, he or she generalises about experiences that presumably relate to the whole group." Let us consider examples 23 (a) and (b):

23 (a) Kana **uchida** kuchengetedza murume mufadze paura. Muitire zvose zvaanoda. *Zvemawomen's rights* hazviite mumba.

(If you (= 'one') want to keep your husband, cook good food for him. Do everything to make him happy. Women's rights are not applicable in the home.)

(b) **Munhu** kana **uchinoroora** rega kubva **wazviratidza** kuti **uri** shoroma. Ukada kuenda nepajero **unozochema**. Chide vakaziva kuti uri kuUK! Vanotoda kana 5 *million* chaiyo yerusambo.

(A person who goes to pay bride-wealth should not make it obvious that he is rich. Once the in-laws see you (= 'one') driving a Pajero to their home, they will raise the bride-wealth. Pity you (one) if they discover that you work in the United Kingdom! They might ask for Z\$5 million for *rusambo*.)

Our female research assistant recorded extract 23 (a) from Marian's, (age 47), speech to young women attending a baby shower and we recorded (b) from an informal discussion on gender issues by male colleagues at a construction site. Although one could say that the *u-* (you) concord Marian uses refers primarily to the bride, it could also index a hypothetical activity open to anyone, that is, how to keep a husband happy in a married relationship. In this case, as in many others, it is fairly clear that the 'indefinite agent' serves as a rather transparent guise for the speaker's own experience and opinions.

As is shown in example 23 (b), there are many instances where the term *munhu*²¹ (person), (equivalence of the English pronoun *one* and French *on*), is used with the indefinite second person. Like the English pronoun *one* and the French pronoun *on*, (Laberge and Sankoff 1980: 280) the Shona noun *munhu* is often used in Shona speech as a kind of pronoun to generalise, to avoid the problems of simply talking about personal experiences. This seems to be the distancing technique where the speaker does not want to make a personal statement but creates a separate persona and attributes his/her feelings to that persona. This technique results in reference ambiguity and, by so doing, allows assertions of greater generality and in some cases the “formulation of morals and truisms” (Laberge and Sankoff, 280). This is precisely what Marian does in 23 (a) where *munhu* is understood to be the subject of the sentence “*Kana [munhu] uchida kuchengetedza munrume mufadze paura,*” and the speaker in 23 (b) does with *munhu* in his utterance “*Munhu kana uchinoroora...*”

Besides foregrounding morals, a lower status speaker can also use the indefinite pronoun to indirectly refer to a co-present referent of a higher social status to avoid embarrassing the referent in public. Similarly, an equal status speaker can use this pronoun to achieve the same effect. We observed the use of a second person pronoun to indirectly refer to a third person higher status referent, either when the referent is a co-present or in the presence of overhearers who could act as whistle blowers. At a construction site Mako, age 26, an assistant to the builder indirectly ridicules a plasterer Mupositori, age 38, for habitually borrowing money from him without

²¹ Preachers use this noun quite frequently in sermonic discourse. Sermons conducted in Shona are a rich source of pronominal address. The indefinite noun *munhu* is necessitated by the fact that preaching is a face-threatening act, which require the use of mitigating devices. We have not discussed sermonic discourse in this study, but our earlier study (Mashiri 2000c) revealed that a study of pronominal use in sermons would provide insight into the pragmatic import of Shona urban pronouns.

paying him back, by treating an equal status colleague, Patrick, age, 25 as a pseudo-addressee:

24. Patrick: **Ndipowoka** mari yesadza,
Mako.
(Mako, could you please lend
me (= 'him') money to buy
sadza.)

Mako: Ndini bengi **rako** ini? Kana
uchida chinja birth certificate
rake woti ndini baba vakoka
nevana vako vava vazukuru
vangu. Kusina mai hakuendwi
Patrick.
(Am I your (= 'his') bank? If
you want to depend on me so
much why don't you have your
birth registration changed to
reflect me as your father and
your children's grandfather.
You have to learn to be self-
reliant, Patrick.)

We discovered that both the first person pronoun concord *ndi-* (I), that Patrick uses for self-reference, and the second person concord *-ko/u-* (you), that Mako uses to refer to Patrick, ostensibly refer to the third person, Mupositori. The non-verbal communication cues from the context made the interpretation of this pronominal shift simple. It became obvious from Mupositori's angry look and the overhearers' gazes and giggles that the speaker's message was meant for Mupositori and not Patrick. The indirect use of the second person singular pronoun to imply the third person in the above discourse provides an insight into the social relationship between the interlocutors. Specifically, it tells us that the interlocutors are friends, know each other very well or they are of equal status.

The discussion in this section has revealed that the second person pronoun has ranges of meanings and reference: it can refer to a single addressee; it can refer to a set of more than one addressee; or it can refer to an abstract category of people that do something or has something done to them.

4.2.3 Third person

Besides referring to people being talked about, rather than talked to by the speaker and addressee in talk, the third person pronoun performs other pragmatic functions in discourse. Jespersen (1924), Head (1978) and Openg (1997) discuss, in detail, the use of the third person in self-address. Jespersen (1924: 217) notes that writers' use of the third person in self-reference in autobiographies is sometimes considered a form of modesty. It may also be self-effacement to convey the impression of absolute objectivity. This, argues Head (1978), implies greater distance than does the more commonly used first person. Head (1978: 172) further remarks that in a natural conversation, "use of the third person for self-reference is more likely to occur when the speaker is also addressed in the third person by those with whom he is communicating." Furthermore, Head points out that while in several other languages the use of both the third person singular and plural is attested (especially in differential situations), in English, the use of the third person in self-reference occurs in the singular.

The data surveyed for this study shows that although the third person singular is more widely used in Shona, both the third person singular and plural are used to index the first person and the second person.

4.2.3.1 *Third person used to mean First person*

In Shona, the third person enumerative singular pronoun *mumwe* (someone) and/or its subject concord, *a-* (she/he) or the honorific plural *ivo* (and/or its subject concord *va-*) (they), may be used to index the first person only in reference. We cite two extracts to help substantiate this claim:

25. Unoswera uchipedzera mari mumahure ako
zvako uchikanganwa kuti une **mumwe**
munhu anoda kudya. Haunyari!
(You waste all the money on your prostitutes
forgetting that there is someone (= ‘me’) who
needs food. You are not even ashamed of
yourself!)

26. Tendekai: Baba, baba chimukai
munonditengera pfuti yangu.
Father, father, could you please
wake up so that you may go
and buy me a (toy) gun.)
George (baba): Ndazvinzwa Tendi. Chirega
kudaro *daddy* **v**akaneta.
Tichazoenda *later*.
(Ok Tendi. Leave daddy (= ‘me’) alone, he (= ‘I’) is tired.
We will go later.)

Example (25) is an extract from Maud’s (age, 35), complain to her husband for neglecting her by spending all the family savings on other women. In this utterance, Maud refers to herself as *mumwe munhu* (someone). This use of the third person to mean first person is also found in Akan (Obeng 1997) and French, (Grevisse 1964). The third person is deliberately used to draw the husband’s attention that he is being selfish by wasting the family resources on other women and has ignored his responsibility of taking care of his wife. Shona cultural norms require a man to adequately take care of his wife [and children]. Neglect, is therefore a breach of the

wife's cultural rights. In the above example, then, the speaker conveys self-pity or the fact that she is being deprived of what is her cultural right. The indirect style that the speaker uses is such a common convention that there is no ambiguity as to whom the third person enumerative pronoun refers to.

Example (26) features an extract of a conversation between Tendekai, age 4, and his father George, age 29, in George's bedroom. George had, earlier on promised to buy Tendekai a toy gun from a local shop. In this context Tendekai enters his father's bedroom in the morning to remind him of his promise by asking him to go and buy the gun. The reply that George gives is not unusual. But, "it is certainly not explicable by reference to the standard grammatical paradigm" (Malone 1997: 44). Why would someone refer to him/herself in the third person? According to grammarians, people shouldn't use language that way. Hence, only an interactional explanation that focusses on the pronoun's reference to the speaker's identity or status and the rights and obligations that go with it, can offer a plausible answer to the question raised above.

First, when George uses the third person pronoun to refer to himself he implies his institutional role as father, which allows him to claim certain rights. Second, this self-reference becomes a resource for refusing politely to honour the child's request. In Shona society, as in many other cultures, refusals²² are not preferred responses to requests, and hence must normally be accompanied by accounts to justify or mitigate

²² A refusal is a speech act that occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to a request, invitation, offer or suggestion. In responding to requests, invitations, offers or suggestions, acceptance or agreement are usually preferred, and refusing or rejecting are not, since they can mean disapproval of the interlocutor's idea and therefore, a threat to the interlocutor's face. While speakers tend to use direct language to express acceptance or agreement, refusals tend to be indirect, include mitigation, and or delay within the turn or across turns.

the refusal (Heritage 1984, Mashiri 2003a) as a way of saving face. Here George's refusal to his son's legitimate request not only involves reference to his institutional [kinship] status and its implied rights, and an explanation of why his refusal is being made ("*Daddy vakaneta.*"), but may also be seen as a distancing in which a third person, rather than "I", marks the refusal. The use of the third person pronoun in examples (25) and (26) is clear evidence of the "creative indexical usage" (Silverstein 1976) of pronouns in Shona.

4.2.3.2 *Third person used to mean Second person*

Our transcripts reveal that the use of the third person enumerative pronoun (also referred to as "quantifier pronouns" by Leech and Svartvik 1975: 163) to indicate the second person is widespread in Shona society. The most common contexts of use are those involving intimates: parent-child, siblings, lovers and friends. The excerpt in (27) involves Panashe, age 5, misbehaving in the house in the presence of visitors. The mother, Vena, age 36, repeatedly orders him to stop misbehaving but Panashe is unmoved by the order. Finally, Vena issues a threat:

27. Vena: **Mumwe munhu** ane pari kumuvava
 chete!
 "Someone is itching for a beating."
 [Stop misbehaving or I will smack
 you!]

Vena uses the third person enumerative pronoun, *mumwe [munhu]* (someone) to mean *iwe* (you). Given the context where Panashe is the only child (misbehaving) in the house and the Shona socialise their children to behave themselves in the presence of elders or visitors, there is no ambiguity with regard to the referent. Vena uses the third person pronoun for two reasons. First, Shona values do not allow a parent or caregiver

to openly reprimand or threaten a child in the presence of visitors, lest the threat is interpreted as indirectly targeted at the visitors. This is so since the Shona, like other African peoples, believe that a face-threatening act may be addressed to a pseudo-epicenter, usually a child, a dog²³, a cat, or any pet, rather than to the real addressee (Obeng 1999: 83). Since the referent is only a child, the indirection is prompted not by the relationship between mother and child, but by the mother's relationship with the visitors and the need to protect her public self-image that is "emotionally invested and cannot be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (Brown and Levinson 1978: 66).

Second, the use of the third person pronoun is for distancing or avoidance. In the context in which it is used, it suggests that Panashe's behaviour is so detestable that he is not worthy to be addressed by name and moreover addressing him by name would give him the undue recognition and attention that he does not deserve.

A similar context was the use of the same pronoun by Tsitsi, age 25, to discourage her fiancé, Fanuel, age 27, from drinking in excess at Tsitsi's cousin's wedding ceremony:

28. Tsitsi: Uchiri kunwa here sha?
(Haven't you had enough dear?)

Fanuel: Speaking loudly) Handiti
muchato here Tsitsi, rega
ndimbonwa *a bit more*.)
(This is a happy occasion Tsitsi,
let me take some more.)

²³ Shona society (like many other African societies) has a rich tradition of using dog names as communicative resources, especially in emotionally volatile situations. A diachronic study of Shona dog names would obviously provide insight into the value of indirectness in relational communication.

Tsitsi: **Vamwe vanhu** vava kuda
 kuonererwa!
 ‘Some people are now trying to
 show-off.’
 [You are now trying to embarrass
 me.]

Since Tsitsi and Fanuel are still dating, cultural values do not allow the latter to lose his public image in the presence of Tsitsi’s family. Since Fanuel has an avoidance relationship with members of Tsitsi’s family, Tsitsi is responsible for controlling his behaviour in this context. The situation is emotionally delicate. Hence, Tsitsi uses the plural form, *vamwe vanhu* (some others), in this case, to hide Fanuel’s identity by avoiding the singular form, *mumwe munhu* (someone) or his name. However, both the addressee and the overhearers are still able to infer who the referent is. Such uses of the generic third person could be said to be fully consummated and sufficient for referent identification (Ashby 1992).

We observed that the third person could also be used in a superior-subordinate relationship. A female secretary, age 28, checks on her boss, age 37, who is in the habit of forgetting to charge his cellular phone:

29. I know kuti **mumwe munhu**
 akanganwa kuchagisa *phone*.
 “I know that someone has not
 remembered to charge his phone.”
 [I know that you have not remembered
 to charge your phone.]

Instead of using the second person honorific plural *imi/ma-* (you), the secretary uses *mumwe munhu* (someone). This pronominal shift enables the speaker to politely ridicule her superior without risking a reprimand.

4.2.4 Demonstrative pronouns

Studies on demonstratives have often been limited to their anaphoric characteristics and functions. Leech and Svartvik's (1975: 58) categorisation of demonstratives as "pointer words": back pointing (i.e. they can point to something mentioned earlier), forward-pointing (i.e. they can point to something mentioned later) and outward-pointing (i.e. they can point to something in the context outside language) clarifies this point. Referentially, demonstratives are classified into those that "identify something near the speaker (either physically, in terms of space or time, or psychologically" and those that "identify something not so near the speaker" (Leech and Svartvik (1975: 58).

The data surveyed for this study show that Shona speakers use demonstratives as reference terms in place of the referents' names. What we found interesting is that only those demonstratives Leech and Svartvik says identify something near the speaker, are used, except that in the usages we observed, the issue of physical proximity is insignificant. Primarily speakers use the singular form *uyu* (this), to refer to lower status or equal status referents and the plural (honorific) form *ava* (these), to refer to superior referents. Consider examples 30 (a), (b) and (c):

30. (a) Researcher: Muri kurongi *eaccomodation*?
(What plans do you have for housing?)
- Tandi: Hapana *but* tine *stand*
yatakatenga **ava** vachiri
vapenyu.
(Nothing specific, but we own
a stand that we bought when
this one
(= 'He') was still alive.)

(b) Sorry shamwari *I delayed you*.
Ndanonotswa ne**ava**.
(I am sorry friend for delaying you. I
was held up by this one (= ‘him’).

(c) Tami: Unosvika kumba nguvai ne*Friday*?
(What time do you get home on
Friday?)

Simon: Ndichaona kuti ndasvika *by 6.30* asi
ndichambonopika **uyu** *kucollege*.
(I will make sure I am home by 6.30,
although I have to pick this one (= ‘she’)
first from college.)

Example 30 (a) is an excerpt of an interview that the researcher had with Tandi, age 29, a family friend, about her housing plans since the death of her husband, (b) was uttered by a woman, approximate age 25, to a friend who waited outside their house and example (c) is part of a conversation the researcher’s former students, Tami, age 26, and Simon, age 26, had at a bus terminus.

We noted from these examples and many others that the speaker only uses the demonstrative for a referent known by both the speaker and the addressee and that the demonstrative is meant to hide the identity of the referent. Tandi’s use of *ava* (this) to refer to her deceased husband also seemed to have a distancing and/or avoidance effect. The tone of the voice and the facial expression of the woman cited in 30 (b) show that she used *ava* (*these*) to denigrate and scorn her husband.

In an interview, Esther Chivero, a fellow linguist at the University of Zimbabwe, noted that

When this demonstrative is used between husband and wife it normally shows a negative attitude towards the referent. Either the husband is being referred to as such because he is authoritative and demands respect or there is no intimacy between them that warrants use of the other's first name (University of Zimbabwe, October 2003).

Esther's explanation reveals that the use of the honorific plural *ava* either connotes genuine respect or scorn. The demonstrative *uyu* (this) that Simon uses in (c) is commonly used by intimates, although our data show that students and junior workers also use it to derogatorily refer to a teacher or superior. The underlying factor in all these usages is that the interlocutors are intimates/friends or acquaintances who share sufficient knowledge to disambiguate the referents of the demonstrative. The creative use of demonstratives in interaction enables interlocutors to engage in private conversations in public places.

There are cases where interlocutors may use commentary demonstratives such as *iri* (class 5), *ichi* (class 7), *idzi* (class 10) and *aka* (class 12) with the syntactic feature [this +NEGATIVE]. We noted that *idzi* is also used to refer to a person whom the speaker or both the speaker and the addressee view positively, or specifically, admire or empathise with. It is clear from the data that speakers of all sexes, ages and social classes only use any of these demonstratives when speaking to an intimate about a referent they both know and view the same. Depending on the conversational context, these commentary demonstratives are preferable because, to some extent, avoid face threat. In fact, the commentary demonstratives seem to be more ambiguous and anonymous than the ordinary ones, hence are more effective pragmatic devices.

We noted that some speakers use these generically negative pronouns to express a positive attitude towards a referent. The positive reference only obtains where the relationship between the speaker, the hearer/addressee and the referent is friendly and cordial. Each of the pronouns indexes varied social meanings depending on the context of use, but all the meanings involve an element of praise and admiration for the referent.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter we have discussed the pragmatic import of Shona pronouns and their pro-forms. In particular, we have looked at the different personal pronouns, their agreement concords, enumerative pronouns and demonstrative pronouns and illustrated how the different pronouns and illustrated how in certain communicative contexts, specific pronouns are used to indicate different persons. We addressed the general problem with the grammatical paradigms, the question of pronouns as linguistic signs, that is, entities in which constant form is paired with constant meaning. The case of the componential treatment of pronouns by structuralist linguists illustrates the problems in identifying tokens of the same form. The problem is considerably more difficult with meaning, where “the establishment of de-contextualised ‘literal’ meanings of pronouns runs into problems for the very reason that the meaning of pronouns is text- and context-derived” (Muhlhausler and Harre 1990: 58). Hence, we have illustrated with numerous data, that the same pronoun forms express a number of different meanings since their meaning is situated. As Malone (1997: 75) noted, pronouns are “irredeemably interactional markers and their use is ruled by interactional rules primarily and grammatical rules only secondarily.”

Apart from being a first person reference, the first person pronouns (singular and plural) and or their agreement concords can be used to index a second or third person reference form. Such pronoun shifts function in various communicative categories; for example, stressing authority, asserting and maintaining power, caricaturing, creating alignment, solidarity, showing commitment and compassion. Based on our data, therefore, pronoun switches involving the first person also help speak what is otherwise unspeakable. This function of the pronoun switch, says Obeng (1997),

has implications for psycholinguistics. It reveals the fact that, through pronoun switches, [interlocutors] can communicate their emotional state through a form of indirectness that is transparent enough for an addressee to understand but strong enough to prevent direct confrontation (218).

When the second person pronoun is used to index the first person it connotes a wide range of meanings. In examples (21) and (22), for instance, the second person indicates solidarity and shared experience, whereas in (20) it refers to a hypothetical activity and has a generalising effect.

The third person, apart from its ordinary usage, may be used indirectly to mean either the first or second person, especially when warning or threatening someone, hide the address's identity or communicating a face-threatening act. We have also discussed the use of the demonstrative pronouns in place of personal names with a distancing/avoidance effect. Sometimes demonstrative pronouns are used to hide the identity of the referent in primate discourse or to denigrate the referent. Throughout,

we stressed the relevance and interplay of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors in determining the various uses of pronouns.

From the discussion presented in this chapter, it is clear that the knowledge of grammatical rules is not adequate for a proper understanding of pronoun usage. The discourses discussed in this study reveal that with respect to pronoun usage, we could argue that rules of social behaviour take precedence over rules of grammar.

In conclusion, following Hymes (1962), Lyons (1982: 58) notes that natural languages are primarily designed for use in face-to-face interaction; hence any analysis of natural language should take the speech event or context of the utterance into account. We therefore hypothesize that the choice of a pronoun depends on a speaker and the relationship between the speaker and the addressee or the referent, as well as the context of interaction. This discussion does not necessarily advocate the subordination of the morphosyntactic characteristics of Shona pronouns (or those of any other language) to their functional features. As Obeng (1997: 219) reminds us, an integration of the pragmatic, morphosyntactic, and discourse or social connotations of these pronouns will yield a considerable understanding of the behaviour of pronouns in a language.

CHAPTER 5

PROPER NAME ADDRESS AND REFERENCE ACTS

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, we demonstrated that in addition to their obvious referential function, Shona pronouns perform social functions. Our focus was on the use of the pronouns in specific ‘instances of discourse’ (Benveniste 1971: 217). Benveniste defines ‘instances of discourse’ as the “discrete and always unique acts by which language is actualised in speech by a speaker” (Benveniste 1971: 217). We illustrated that ‘instances of discourse’ include not only the linguistic forms themselves but also the participants involved in the interaction, the context, and the role-relations of the participants.

The present chapter builds on these observations. Here, we examine how speakers use proper names, that is, personal names alone and with titles, surname, with and without titles, full formal name and teknonyms as address and reference resources in interaction.²⁴ We also comment on instances of name avoidance and the pragmatic implications of these avoidances. Before we discuss address and reference patterns involving these proper names we shall outline the concept of name in general and in Africa in particular and the social meaning of names.

²⁴ Naming has been studied from varied persuasions, including anthropology (e.g. Alford 1988, Britto 1987), Philosophy (e.g. Mill 1843, Mazrui 1986), Ethnology (e.g. Takaki 1984), Anthropological Linguistics (e.g. Abdel-Jawad 1986, de Klerk and Bosch 1996), Linguistics (e.g. Koopman 1979, Pongweni 1983, Mashiri 2003) and Sociolinguistics (e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1986, Oyetade 1995, Mashiri 1999, Dickey 2002). Here, we are only concerned with naming from a Sociolinguistic perspective, and specifically, with those aspects of names which have a direct bearing on addressing and referencing.

Names are of central importance to the Shona address and reference system so much that we may hypothetically regard names as a standard or default form of address or reference. Naturally, as Parkin (1982: 214) claims, there are intricate relations between names and other singular expressions, such as pronouns, and kinship, to which names are always tied by rules of contrast and substitutability. The use of names as a standard form of address, however, means that in any given situation where a name is not used, “the rule producing that omission is not primarily a rule about the use of names, but a rule about the other form of address which it replaces” (Dickey 2002: 44). Precise rules for the use of names versus other addresses thus cannot be given until these other address forms have been examined.

The pragmatic significance of names, their avoidance or usage restrictions among the Shona is best understood within the context of the connection between the name and the name bearer, and the meaningfulness of the name in the African context. We shall give an elaborate explanation of this connection since the explanation provides insight into the pragmatic import of naming.

5.1.1 *The concept of name*

Various scholars have presented a large number of definitions, which however, have been severely criticised. Algeo (1973: 12-13) lists four criteria used for defining and classifying proper nouns in English: orthographical, morphosyntactic, referential, and syntactic. Orthographically, proper names constitute capitalised and uncapitalised words; on the morphosyntactic level, there are proper nouns and common nouns; on the referential level, singular terms and general terms, and on the semantic level, proper names and common names (appellatives). Algeo however, concludes that the

definition of names depends on which level of language one deals with, and whether one is concerned with the universals of naming or naming within a specific language.

Despite the numerous and varied approaches on names, scholars generally agree that contrary to common nouns, proper nouns denote specific individuals, entities and members of classes (Bean 1980: 305). Traditionally names are perceived as “a device of convenience... to introduce order into a mass of human relationships, a means of distinguishing you from me” (Adamic 1942: 20). What this definition implies is that a name is merely a pointer ‘like an outstretched index finger’ (Adamic 1942: 20). This characterisation of names resonates with the (Western) linguistic view of language as a “system of signs, not symbols” (Finnegan and Besnier 1989) and names as “linguistic signs arbitrarily connected to their referent” (Mill 1843, cited in Rymes 1996: 238). Words act as a sign system and differ intrinsically from the symbols, which bear some likeness or logical like to their referents (de Klerk and Bosch 1996: 168).

This view that proper names simply stand for their bearers and do not indicate their attributes is especially attributed to Mill (1906). According to Mill, proper names are denotative, not connotative, that is, they are words that denote objects without signification. As Mill (1906: 20) puts it:

Proper names are not connotative: they denote individuals who are called by them; but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals. When we name a person by the name Paul, or a dog by the name Caesar, these names are simply marks used to enable those individuals to be made subjects of discourse. It may be said,

indeed, that we must have had some reason for giving them those names other than any others; and this is true; but the name, once given, is independent of the reason.

Several philosophers built on Mill's ideas, but many others have challenged them. Algeo (1973: 57) agrees with Mill but argues that in many naming systems, though name giving is arbitrary, it is carefully patterned.

We shall say that the definition of names as sheer signposts is not entirely incorrect, but insufficient. We agree with Hertzler (1965: 270) that

A name does several things. First, it identifies, denotes and signifies something, comes to be descriptive of it, and thus takes it out of the realm of the unknown or the amorphous.

But, we will add that a name also connotes something. Like Austin (1962), we view the act of naming as a speech act which includes a performative utterance; the person does not only say something but is actually doing something with words if specific constraints in the real world are met. Many onomasticians agree that appellatives must have meaning in order to function properly, while names have content, and these functions are to connote and denote respectively. This dual function of names brings us to the distinction between lexical meaning and social meaning emphasised in Chapter 1. We re-emphasise that the social meaning of the names is an aspect that we need to take into account in the sociolinguistic analysis of address and reference practices, especially African ones.

5.1.2 The African concept of name

Although the details of the developments in the onomastic or anthroponymic systems of Africa (especially South of the Sahara) are not relevant to this study, we shall illustrate the general conception of naming in Africa. This will provide good grounding for the interpretation of the data on the value of Shona names as address or reference resources.

African naming systems do not necessarily have much in common. Just as there are many and varied cultures in Africa, so are there also many and varied naming systems. As mentioned earlier, two aspects seem to be of special significance here: the connection between the name and the person and the name meaningfulness. Let us investigate these.

5.1.2.1 Name and person

Many scholars have argued that the main difference between the European and African concept of name is that in Africa, the name and the person are inseparable. In the African traditional thinking, the name is the person, whereas the European concept is that the name is a mere label that refers to the person (Koopman 1986: 15, Ngubane 1998: 178, Obeng 1999: 88 and Mashiri 2003b: 2-3). Therefore in Africa, one is not only called X, one is X (Koopman 1986, Obiechina 1975, Mbiti 1969, Obeng 1999). Ngubane (1998: 178) puts this clearly when he says:

Names among the African people are part and parcel of their existence. The name is that person's identity. One cannot separate the name from the person because the two are one.

The close connection between the name and the person is reflected in the common idea in Africa that the child is not a person until he or she is named. Should an infant die before naming, it is thought of as if it never existed, but if an infant who had already received a name dies, its parents can still be addressed by its name in the form of a teknonym. Thus, Africans generally regard a dead person as having a personality only as long as there are people who recognise him/her by name. If no one recognises him/her by name, this “living dead” loses his/her humanness, and as the Shona say “*anorova*” (he/she becomes extinct), thus becoming a mere spirit (Mbiti 1969: 79). Hence keeping a dead relative’s name alive is a major concern for many Africans.

Many scholars have claimed that in many African societies, children are traditionally named after their departed relatives, which indicates the belief that the newly born child is a reincarnation of the dead person (Blount 1993: 137, Chitando 1998: 111). Other Africans also name their children after living relations and are thus identified with them as *masazita* (namesakes). Among the Shona, a first-born son may be named after his paternal grandfather and a daughter after her paternal grandmother. Therefore, a father can affectionately address his son as *baba* or *mudhara* (father) and his daughter as *amai* or *muchembere* (mother).

It is a common idea among the Shona, Ndebele, Basotho and Yoruba, for example, that the name may have a psychological effect on the character and personality of the name bearer (Ojoade 1980: 196). Because of this, parents do not name their children after people with doubtful reputations. Writing on naming practices among the African Christians in Zimbabwe, Chitando (1998: 111) remarks that,

People who engaged in socially unacceptable activities such as witchcraft and sorcery could not expect relatives to name children after them.

Therefore, people are often expected to behave in such a manner as to uphold their name.

Because of the close connection between the name and the individual many African societies, like many other societies in the world, believe in the mythical or magical power of naming or name use. It is believed that witches could mystically use an individual's name to "further their nefarious activities and harm the intended victim" (Chitando 1998: 111). Chitando further claims that in traditional Shona society, children were warned never to respond when their name was called at night. It seems that there is hidden power in personal names: to know the person means to control him/her (Hallgen 1988: 159). This notion re-emphasises the view of the ontological nature of proper names made earlier. The tendency of the name being identified with the essence of its object is the fundamental assumption of what Cassirer (1946: 3) calls "the mythmaking consciousness". Because of the myth associated with the name, in many societies, including Shona, the real name is not to be exposed to strangers who may use it in a magical manner (Young 1931: 112).

Fraser (1950: 245) tells us that,

Every Egyptian receives two names, which were known respectively as the true name and the good name, or the great name and the little name; and while the good or little name was made public, the true or great name appears to

have been carefully concealed. A Brahman child receives two names, one for common use, the other a secret name which none but his father and mother should know. The latter is only used at ceremonies such as marriage. The latter is only used to protect the person against magic, since a charm becomes only effectual in combination with the real name.

Similar fears occur among the Tshi of West Africa where a person's name is always concealed from all but his nearest relatives, and to other people, he is always known by a nickname. The Ewe speaking people believe in a real material connection between a person and his/her name, and that, by means of the name, injury may be done to the person (Clodd 1920: 40). The same is true of some groups in America. Adler (1978: 99) claims that the Abipones of South America would nudge their neighbour to answer for them when anyone among them was asked his/her name. In Shona, many people also have up to three names, the primary, the 'school' or second name²⁵ and nickname. The primary name and nickname seem to be associated with a person's identity than his/her 'school' name. Thus, one's primary name and nickname may remain secret and their use may index specific social meanings.

The dislike to reveal one's name to strangers is strong among children and adolescent females. Some children or adolescent females whom we asked for their names or their parent's name, either in interviews or casual conversations either gave the answer *Munoridii?* (Why do you need to know my name?), gave a false name, or hesitantly

²⁵ Mashiri (1999) revealed that many Zimbabwean children have a primary (birth) name that is invariably Shona, and an additional or "school" name. This is an area where English influence is decidedly evident (Ngara 1993: 31). Cultural contact with colonial values, power, language and the demands of colonial bureaucracy resulted in the introduction of Western names and naming practices. In Zimbabwe, as in many other African countries (see de Klerk and Bosch 1996), many parents give their children English names as a symbol of acculturation or Christian conversion. To some extent, people's possession of more than one personal name has implications for speakers' choice and use of names as address and reference terms and the intended meanings.

disclosed the real names. Of course, in such a situation one would never know whether or not the name mentioned is the 'real' one. Thus, there is a very strong taboo connected with the mentioning of names, caused by belief in exuvial magic. For the adolescent females, revealing one's name to a male stranger especially, "amounts to the revelation of a highly intimate personal fact" (Alford 1988: 108). It is the same as exposing oneself or giving access to one's soul since a person is made of a body, a soul and a name. Children always want to find out a stranger's name, yet they are reluctant to reveal their own.

The magic power of the word (name) that we have hypothesised here could also offer an explanation to the Shona custom of avoiding addressing one's parents-in-law or children-in-law by personal name. In some cultures, people in these relationships are often forbidden not only to pronounce each other's names, but also even to utter ordinary words, which resemble or have a single syllable in common with these names. Finlayson (1995) claims that this phenomenon, which she calls *isihlonipho sabafazi* (women's language of respect) occurs among some Nguni people, especially women. Describing what this custom entails, Finlayson (1995: 143) says that, "from the time the woman enters her in-laws' home she may not pronounce words which have any syllable that is part of the names that occur among her husband's relatives."

Finlayson gives feminist explanations to the use of this custom, but the fundamental reasons are fostering respect and avoiding unwarranted closeness that may result in violation of sexual taboos between in-laws. The distance maintained serves to keep the relationship fixed, conventional, and customary. A significant aspect which should be considered is that it is not the name itself that is at issue but rather, as Herbert

(1990: 471) notes, “the name as a device which attracts the attention of its bearer and focuses upon the person uttering the name.”

Change of social status, especially of Shona women, may lead to restrictions of name use. The Shona proverb *Charehwa mutupo chaera* (A married woman should be respected) summarises the constraint. This embargo is, however not permanent. It is conditional on circumstances, and when these change it ceases to operate. The use or non-use of a married woman’s personal name depends on her relationship with the speaker and/or the co-participants in the conversation, the social situation (e.g. wedding, classroom, office, etc) and the speaker’s intended pragmatic effect.

5.1.2.2 *Name meaningfulness*

Name meaningfulness is another criterion scholars frequently offer in distinguishing African and European personal naming. Scholars often stress that African names carry semantic and pragmatic import, that is, they “have meaning” and that this meaning is also identified by people who bear them (Mashiri 2003b, Chitando 1998, de Klerk and Bosch 1995, Suzman 1994). For this reason, all over Africa, personal names are taken seriously and chosen with special care and consideration (Obeng 1999: 88).

A pragmatic analysis of the use of Shona names provides some answers to the widely repeated old Shakespearian question, “What’s in a name?” The data analysed in this chapter will show that names acquire their significance from the contexts of their use as communication resources. The link between name meaningfulness and the context and reasons of use explains the process of deriving proper names from common names that is widespread in Shona, perhaps as in many other African languages. The

occurrence of a number of address and reference alternatives in African society demonstrates the communicative and pragmatic value of names. The alternation of names in address and reference is determined by the intended social meaning, the contextual constraints of name use and the speaker's intention.

Meanings of names as address or reference terms may be derived from mapping usage according to features of human identity and relationships that act as “ selectors” (Ervin-Tripp 1972) between alternative forms. Features of human identity that determine name use are of two types: power (based on, for example, age, gender, or rank) or solidarity (similarity of background, such as social class, region, political party, etc) and individual attributes (for example, behavioural traits and physical appearance).

In Chapter four, we noted that pronominal use, depends, among other things, on the social distance between the interlocutors and that the social distance scale exists as a continuum with strangers and intimates on the two extreme ends of the scale and friends and acquaintances, in the middle. With regards to naming, the use of names, including reciprocity and non-reciprocity, depends on familiarity, intimacy and acquaintanceship as well.

5.2 Personal names

The interchange of personal names is done on a reciprocal or non-reciprocal basis. This has to do with social distance (same peer, friends, close associates) and status. Use of reciprocal personal names by friends, peers and close associates, is largely

unproblematic. Hence, we will not dwell on it. Name use in relationships involving the status variable deserves a measure of elaboration.

5.2.1 *Personal name use in family interactions*

As stated in Chapter 3, we consider the family as a speech community with its members sharing knowledge about the social and linguistic rules that constrain their behaviour. Speakers who share with other speakers the knowledge of such constraints placed upon them are said to belong to the same speech community. Shared experience between spouses, parents and children, caregivers and young children and between siblings give names meanings specific to these shared experiences.

Personal names are used between parents, by parents to their children, caregivers to young children and between siblings. We are concerned only with instances where interlocutors use personal names to imply social meanings.

5.2.1.1 *Vocatives*

Shona families use vocatives extensively. We observed three major classes: personal names, kinship terms and social honorifics. In this chapter we are concerned only with personal names. Both parents and children use personal names vocatively. However, before we examine interactive instances of vocative use, we need to discuss some of the general functions vocatives serve in discourse.

Zwicky (1974) states that vocatives serve at least two functions: firstly calls, designed to catch the addressee's attention and secondly, they serve to maintain or emphasise the contact between the speaker and addressee (functioning like back channelling).

Zwicky's distinction corresponds to the one Schegloff (1968) makes for terms of address in conversational openings. Leech (1999) distinguishes three pragmatic functions on the basis of the spoken section of the Longman Spoken and Written English (LSWE) corpus: (1) summoning attention, (2) address identification, (3) maintaining and reinforcing social relationships. These three functions may co-occur in various combinations and there may be further communicative functions. Zwicky argues for the sociolinguistic markedness of terms of address and their capacity to locate the speaker and the discourse in a particular setting by expressing attitude, politeness, status, and judgements about various properties of the addressee, among other things. He stresses that there is virtually no affectively neutral vocative.

Let us now examine examples of vocative use in some interactive occasions and see whether the vocatives have the same functions as those suggested by either Zwicky (1974) or Leech (1999), or their functions are exclusively determined by discourse features.

We visited a friend, Monica, age 37, to record parent-child interaction through participant observation. On this visit we talked about Monica's maid who had just stolen some clothes and money and left abruptly. Monica's son, Tamirirashe (passionately addressed as Tami), age 5, sat with us interrupting the conversation repeatedly:

1. Researcher: Saka chii chakaitika?
 (What happened?)

 Tami: Vakabirwa nasisi Tambu.
 (Sister Tambu stole from her)

- Monica: A-a, musikana wangu akaba dzimwe hembe dzangu nemari yanga iri mu*wardrobe and disappeared*.
(My maid stole some of my clothes and money from the wardrobe and she disappeared.)
- Tami: Mhamha, mhamha...
(Mother, mother...)
- Monica: Tami!
- Researcher: Anobva kupi?
(Where is her home?)
- Tami: Mha::mha...
(Mother...)
- Monica: Tamirirashe!

The vocative personal name *mhamha* (mother) that the child uses serves Zwicky's attention getting function. This is signalled by the stress the speaker puts on the penultimate syllable. The vocative '*Tami!*' which Monica uses performs a regulatory function. The use of the passionate form *Tami* softens the prohibition but creates ambiguity in terms of the meaning of the message. Hence, the child continues with his interruption. Monica shifts to a sterner prohibition by adopting the full form of the child's name and raising the volume of voice. In using the full form *Tamirirashe* instead of the expected form *Tami*, Monica is making a marked statement.

Writing about body communication, Argyle (1975: 158) remarks, "prosodic signals are an integral part of verbal utterances, since they clearly add to the meaning of what is said." Thus, the prosodic features that Monica uses, as well as the marked form of the child's name indicates her seriousness. They also warn the child to anticipate trouble. This time the child uses his understanding of the vocative, past experience in similar situations and the values taught to him about child participation in adult talk,

to interpret the meaning of the vocative correctly. He abandons the interruption forthwith.

We also observed another occasion involving two sons belonging to a relative, Tinashe, age 11, and Nathan, age 6. They played outside while the parents sat in the house talking to the researcher. Suddenly Nathan is heard crying and the father calls out *Tinashe!* The vocative address to Tinashe rather than Nathan abounds with affective meaning. Nathan interprets it as a response to his attention-seeking cry. But Tinashe interprets it as ridicule as well as an allegation for bullying his younger brother. Hence he quickly exonerates himself:

2. Handina zvandambomuita ini!
(I haven't done anything to him!)

The varied responses reveal that the vocative is addressed to both Tinashe and Nathan, that is, to the latter as an assurance for protection, and to the former, as ridicule and warning. The ambiguity arising from these levels of meaning reflects Dunkling's (1990) claim that almost any word, name or phrase used vocatively can be made to belie its apparent face value.

One other interactive situation in which personal names are used vocatively is in children's play games. We observed a group of small boys play during their Sunday school class at one Methodist congregation. These boys meet only on Sundays and do not know each other that well. But, among them are Nyasha, age 7, and Patrick, age 8, who attend the same school and live in the same neighbourhood. When Patrick narrates a story to the group, he keeps on gazing at and addressing Nyasha on

sentence boundaries. The name Nyasha is followed by the slang friendship term, *Shaz* [*shamwari*](friend), as in *Nyasha shaz!* (Nyasha, my friend).

It appears that the vocative in this case serves a relationship-maintenance role. This seems to dovetail with Emihovich's (1981) observation in his/her study of children's friendship groups. In this study Emihovich concludes that children use personal names to maintain solidarity as a friendship cohort and indicate their special relationship as "best buddies" vis-à-vis other children around them. If we take Nyasha's address behaviour as representative of Shona children in friendship groups, then we can conclude that Emihovich's observations also apply to Shona.

In our data the constructed talk between female friends, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, uncles and nephews and uncles and nieces vocatives occur in sequences which can be considered relationship-negotiating situations. The predominant speech acts occurring in these situations are arguments and giving advice. Although the syntactic features of the vocatives are not relevant to our purpose, suffice to say that the vocatives occur either at the beginning or end of a sentence. The personal names appear mainly in apposition to endearment terms, as in *Chiratidzo, mwanangu...* (Chiratidzo, my daughter) or kinship terms, e.g. *Mabasa, mwana wehanzadzi* (Mabasa, son of my brother), *Chengeto, munin'ina* (Chengeto, my young sister), etc. In our data, these naming devices are used in various contexts including confrontation, rebuke, appeal, encouragement, etc. In each case, however, as in the friendship discourse discussed earlier, the vocatives play a relationship-maintenance role.

Some cases, though rare, when parents use personal names to address each other, have also been observed. This is an evident example of “byplay” (Abraskėviciute 2001: 4) (or talking over heads) when parents want to discuss something that is not intended for the ears of their children.

5.2.1.2 *Using the primary name*

Earlier we defined the primary name in terms of language and period of naming. Our data, as well as Mashiri’s (1999) and Pongweni’s (1983) make it clear that a Shona speaker’s primary name is Shona and is given at birth (as opposed to acquired later in life). Due to the dynamics of culture and language contact, colonialism and Christianity, most Shona speaking Zimbabweans born before the attainment of national independence, in 1980 (cf. Mashiri 2003b) have a Shona name and an English or Christian name. For some, the Shona name is only known and used by family members or used in specific interactive situations to achieve pragmatic effect. We will now proceed to discuss cases where acquaintances, family members, parents, siblings or relatives use these ‘secret’ names as address or reference resources.

Both observations and interviews revealed that adult relatives who are on a personal name basis with an individual and of the same or alternate generation with that individual might address or refer to him/her by primary name. This naming practice is common in greetings and/or when both the speaker and the addressee know the referent from childhood.

We observed an incident where a company executive, Phillip, age 39 came to speak on financing academic publications at a meeting of Academic writers in Zimbabwe.

During a chit chat after the talk most people addressed Phillip by title plus surname (TSN) and a few others (close associates) called him *Phillip*, then came one gentleman who grabbed Phillip in a playful fashion and speaking on top of his voice, addressed Phillip as *Kakova* (a little stream). Phillip looked perplexed and ashamed yet the speaker seemed excited. Since Phillip did not appear to have recognised the speaker, the speaker introduced himself elaborately making reference to childhood encounters. From our inference of the events, the speaker used Phillip's primary name to index familiarity and his right to share Phillip's honour.

Some interviewees referred to instances where relatives address or refer to them by their primary names at ceremonies of rites of passage: marriage or wedding ceremonies and graduation and birthday parties, when invited to speak or when offering gifts. The use of the primary name, says one interviewee, is more often than not accompanied by reference to kinship links, that is, pointing at how the speaker is related to the referent. In addition to legitimising him/herself, the speaker uses this rhetorical strategy to signify closeness to, familiarity with the addressee or referent and a claim to certain kinship links, rights and obligations. As if the mentioning of one's primary name usurps one's power or self-esteem (Alder 1978), many of the 'victims' of this naming practice say that they are seized with a mixture of hopelessness, embarrassment, and annoyance when this name is mentioned²⁶.

²⁶ The negative feeling felt by the young people at the use of their primary names in public is attributable to the European missionaries' marginalisation of African languages and culture, including naming systems, during the colonial period and the dominance of English as the language of wider communication, education and 'civilisation.' Missionaries and colonial administrators worked together to create systems and institutions (e.g. the church, school, industry) that forced Africans to abandon their primary names and acquire English names as legitimate identity codes for securing entry into these institutions. The colonial socialisation that African received in these and other institutions made them perceive their traditional identities (including names) and values as uncivilised and demeaning and the new identities (including English names) and values as civilised and prestigious.

Interviews also gave us insights into the addressor's or speaker's intention or reason for using a primary name. Kethiwe, age 29, says that she often addresses her younger brother, Abel, age 12, using his 'secret' Shona name, *Chisirimunhu* only when she is ridiculing or rebuking him. She claims that this strategy has always worked since the brother does not like the neighbours or his friends to hear the name repeated and because the primary name signals what he believes to be "the dark side of his identity" (Kethiwe, 12 November 2003).

Some parents interviewed say that they address their grown children with their primary name when they want to show anger, annoyance, seriousness or at times passion, when giving advice, reprimanding, issuing directives or even thanking them.

This means that primary names may, like nicknames, be endowed with powers of social control (Holland (1990: 260). What is apparent from the illocutionary force of the naming practices described above is that names are not simply indifferent labels and that Shakespeare's claim in *Romeo and Juliet* that "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (Frank and Anshen 1983: 9), does not seem to apply to our situation. Names seem to derive social meanings from their context of use as suggested by more functional and practice-oriented approaches (Searle 1970, Lyons 1977), which advocate the need to see names as situated phenomena.

Although parents can address or refer to their young or older children by personal name, we did not find cases of children addressing or referring to their parents by personal name, except in three instances. One, children at the age of four and below

sometimes address their mothers by personal name (no case of fathers were found). Many parents seem to take this behaviour lightly and regard it as part of the children's natural language and cultural acquisition process. However, in some instances, caregivers (parents themselves, older siblings, maids, relatives) admonish the children for that behaviour as part of socialising them into the conventional norms of addressing. In some cases we discovered that older siblings (5-9 years) who could not call out their parents' names, clandestinely instruct smaller children to do it to their amusement.

It appears like the amusement comes from the fact that children from the age of 5 are normally not expected to address their parents or refer to them using personal names, except when they are required to supply these names as responses to questions by public authorities (e.g. at school, church, police, etc.) or individuals. When we asked some children from Mabvuku and Greencroft, the question,

3. Amai/Baba vako vanonzi ani?
 (What is your mother/father's name?)

we noticed some anxiety associated with taboo violation, among the children. We also observed that when a relative introduces a child to an acquaintance by referring to the child's parent's name, as in *Uyu mwana waNthingi* (This is so and so's child), the child becomes shy.

The third occasion when a child can refer to his/her parent by name is when boasting, making an oath or promise. Our data shows that teenagers and adults, both male and female mention the name of either of their parents when boasting, swearing or making

a promise²⁷, although the frequency is greater in women than in men. Let us look at the following examples:

4. Wati chii? Unorova ani wacho?
NaUsayihwevhu, imbozviedza uone!
Ndinombonzi aniko iyeni? Uri
kunyatsondipiwa zvakanaka here?
Ndini Vimbai gotwe raAlice!
(What have just said? Who do you
want to beat? I swear by (my father)
Usayihwevhu, just try it and you see
what happens! Do you know who I
am? Do you really know me well? I'm
Vimbai, Alice's last-born child!)
5. Jona: Sei uchida kukwereta imwe mari iwe usati wadzosa
yandakakupa *last month*?
(Why do you want to borrow more money before you
pay back what I lent you last month?)
- Sam: Ndibatsirewo wena. *I am stranded*. Ndinokupa mari
yako yese *at the end of this month*, idi. NaSekesai
chaiye!
(Please help me. I am stranded. I will pay back all of it
this month-end. Truly. By (my own mother) Sekesai!)

The utterance in example (4) is part of a recording of a verbal duel between a woman and her husband outside their house in Dzivarasekwa suburb. In the utterance the woman boasts by mentioning the name of her presumably, deceased father, *Usayihwevhu*. She stresses her point by also evoking her maternal identity by linking herself with her mother, Alice. In example (5) Sam reinforces the promise to pay back Jona's money by mentioning his mother's name. In both examples, referring to one's parent(s) by personal name expresses seriousness and commitment. Although it is not

²⁷ We are using the word promise here in a non-technical sense. The technical sense of the word is elaborately discussed various authors in their expositions of the Speech act theory. For example, Searle (1969) discourse which forms of speech qualify as 'promises' and which ones do not, categories of promises, how promises as expressed, etc. There is need for a data driven research to establish whether or not Shona has speech forms that fit into Searle's (or some other author) theory of 'promises' or there is need for a grounded theory of what Shona speakers perceive as 'promises'.

easy to tell from the speech whether or not the speakers are referring to deceased or living parents, one can only infer from the register.

In Shona oral tradition, the names that people often call out when making an oath, a promise or swearing are those of deceased relatives or the divine. The Shona believe in the sacred powers of their ancestors or the divine, especially that this power can positively influence their behaviour. Calling their ancestors' personal names is a way of high-rating themselves and sometimes abasing their opponent (cf. Smitherman 2000, on insult in Black language).

5.2.2 *Personal naming among non-kin interactants*

It appears that the rules that govern the use of personal names in the family are extended to the public sphere. Age is an important factor that determines name use. Writing on address practices among the Yoruba, Oyetade (1995: 523) says,

An older person addresses a younger person by name, but the latter dares not reply to the former in the same way. It is considered impolite, rude and grossly insolent to address an older person by name among the Yoruba.

This same pattern applies to Shona. But, in institutions and organisations power derived from achieved status is also an important factor in determining who addresses whom by personal name and who does not. In Shona as in many other cultures, when the addressor surpasses the addressee both in age and rank or occupational status, then he/she obviously enjoys the privilege to use the latter's personal name in address. But when age and rank are in conflict the pattern of use depends on cultural conventions.

Brown and Ford (1964: 237) are quite clear on how the Westerners resolve this conflict:

The member of a dyad who is older (a difference of 15 years or more seems to be significant) will be called by TLN and call the younger person by FN. The person with the higher occupational status also has the privilege of being addressed with TLN while addressing the other person with FN. It is not always the case that older people have higher occupational status than younger ones. When there is a conflict, for instance between a younger executive and an old janitor, it will be occupational status that takes precedence; the janitor will be called by FN and address the executive by TLN.

We have shown elsewhere (Mashiri, forthcoming) that in spite of modernisation, urbanisation and the influence of western culture on Shona culture, age still takes precedence over rank or occupational status. However, sometimes the age-rank conflict is resolved by adopting mutual reciprocal TLN. Our data shows that the Shona naming patterns are more complex than the American ones presented by Brown and Ford.

In Shona, in addition to age and rank, marital status and the context of naming are also important factors. Some of our data show instances of attempts to introduce or enforce universal personal naming in some corporate organisations and how the interaction of age, rank or power and marital status complicates this effort. It is clear from our data that the rules governing addressing do not necessarily coincide with those determining reference.

We mentioned earlier that beside the social factors of age, status, etc, relational factors, such as degree of acquaintance or intimacy or non-intimacy, also determine name use. In this section, we will also give examples of occasions when relational factors govern the use of personal names.

We observed that in work places, older colleagues could address younger colleagues by their personal names; bosses address younger secretaries and junior staff by personal name (except in organisations that use universal personal naming and those that follow the western patterns). This naming practice is unmarked, hence pragmatically empty. It is the younger or junior persons' use of the older or senior people's personal names in reference that is pragmatically significant.

Our data shows that it is quite common for young people to use older people's personal names, nicknames, initials, or some endearment terms when referring to them in their absence. We observed numerous cases of high school and college students (no cases were evident from primary school pupils) referring to their teachers or heads of institutions by their personal names.

In conversations with some university students we learnt that students feel free to refer to their lecturer(s) by personal names in their talk, even in settings where the referent could be a bystander or co-referent. This is necessitated by the ambiguity posed by personal names. Many people have [biblical] English names or Shona Christian names (cf. Mashiri 2003b) which could be shared by a number of people. When a speaker refers to *Andrew* or *Munashe*, he/she could be talking about any of

several people. This anonymity gives speakers the comfort of gossiping about and / or denigrating older people in public without fear.

One other area where this freedom is also exercised is in political talk. In the context of the Public Order and Security Act (POSA)²⁸ in Zimbabwe, ordinary people can use personal names such as *Grace*, *Robert*, *Morgan*, etc, to refer to public figures contemptuously as well as admiringly. Like metaphors, the personal names may be employed for “connotative or emotional purposes in arousing emotions and reinforcing particular perspectives,” (Wilson 1990: 105) and they can be used to create and communicate absurd images people employ for the purposes of defaming political leaders. It is clear from this discussion that personal names, including seemingly opaque cases such as Robert and Morgan, do have meaning, either of a connotative type (Katz 1977, Ziff 1960), through association with use (Searle 1958, 1969), or through explicit reference fixing of name and descriptive backing of associations (Carroll 1985).

The assumptions we have made about age seem to imply that same age and same rank interlocutors can care-freely exchange first names. Our data shows that this is not the case. In such instances the interlocutors’ marital status and the setting of the conversation are stronger determinants of name use than age. There is ample evidence in the data that same-generation male and female interactants of the same occupational status may address each other by mutual personal name in private or in

²⁸ The Public Order and Security Act (Chapter 11: 17) became law in Zimbabwe with effect from 22 January 2002. It makes reference to a wide range of acts classified as offences under this law. Relevant to naming is the section that refers to “publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the state” and the one on insulting the President. The act has been the subject of widespread debate nationally and internationally, being widely condemned by some Human Rights activists, among others.

work situations involving same status audience. However, this may not be attainable with their spouses or lovers as co-present referents, bystanders or eavesdroppers.

After an end of year party for one local government department where members invited their spouses and/or lovers, Nancy, age 33, a senior officer strongly complains to Temba, age 34, a colleague of a similar grade, for addressing her by her personal name in the presence of her husband:

6. Haunyari here Temba. Zvokubasa ndezvokubasa, *He [her husband] doesn't like that* kana.
(Behave yourself Temba. You cannot address me in the same manner you do at work. My husband is not at all amused.)

In our informal conversations with Nancy and Temba's friends and colleagues, the popular opinion was that Nancy's complaint is justified since culturally, especially considering Nancy's marital status, the two colleagues are considered as *vanyarikani*, with a "taboo relationship" (McGivney 1993: 28). Singular pronouns or personal names are avoided in the presence of their spouses. In fact, in such cases, respect would normally also include restrictions on certain topics (such as sexuality) and physical proximity. Since both reciprocal and non-reciprocal use of personal names in 'taboo relationships' could be (mis) interpreted to index an intimate relationship, interlocutors select alternatives that either disguise the real relationship, or genuinely indicate respect. Thus, in Shona, one's marital status supersedes age in determining naming.

We observed that the naming practices in private organisations, particularly those formally run exclusively by Europeans are westernised. In some instances the power semantic determines who addresses whom by name and who does not, and in other instances, there are attempts to introduce, enforce and maintain universal personal naming.

Where power is the decisive factor, the marital status of a female subordinate becomes generally insignificant. Many bosses, especially in private organisations tend to address their female secretaries by personal name while the secretaries reply by TSN. However, in public or when talking about the secretaries with junior staff or clients, the bosses use the secretaries' TSN. It is clear that in spite of adopting western address or naming practices in formal and private discourse, their withdrawal in reference or in public shows partial adherence to the cultural naming constraints.

We came across a number of corporations in which personal naming is said to be universal. That is, all members, from the chief executive officer (CEO) down to the person of lowest rank, are on first-name basis with all others. There is an attempt to extinguish TSN. Peters and Waterman (1982), Kanter (1983) and Lawler (1990) observe similar practices in some American corporations. They regard universal personal naming as reflective of the interpersonal camaraderie and equality that characterises relations at innovative and excellent companies. At Disney, everyone is on a first name basis; employees' tags bear only personal names.

In the Zimbabwean cases observed, the situation is mixed although again, age and marital status seem to continue blocking the successful implementation of the

universal personal naming policy. Casual conversations with some employees in the corporations revealed that older employees and some married women lead the ‘boycott’ of using or receiving personal name address. Where the superiors are also older than the subordinates, the latter are not comfortable to call the former by personal name. The failure of the universal personal name practice could be attributed to the adherence to the Shona cultural values of *nyadzi* (shyness) and *rukudzo* (respect) since reciprocal personal naming recurs throughout face-to-face interaction sequences. Cohorts of junior employees’ widespread use in reference of personal names or nicknames of the more senior members of the corporation reflects the significance of these cultural factors

5.2.3 *Intimate talk*

Our data also shows instances where Shona male speakers use vocatives to address women in courtship interactions. Shona courtship discourse is characterised by intervals of silence and what Chimhundu (1987: 4) calls, “a battle of wits.” As Chitauo (1995: 53) notes, courtship discourse is “a battle of wits” because these encounters are verbal duels in which a man should show his verbal skill to outwit the woman. Interviews with young men and women revealed that the man tend to dominate the courtship conversations and use the woman’s personal name vocatively to prompt her into responding after intervals of silence. The man also uses the short form (endearment) of the woman’s personal name in an attempt to charm her soul.

5.3 **Title and Personal name**

Although addressing and referring to people by title plus personal name (TPN) is not very widespread among the urban Shona, this is quite common in traditional society

(Mashiri 1999). Mashiri describes how Shona speakers use a kinship title with a referent's personal name (e.g. *tete Anna* 'aunt Anna', *babamukuru Murombo* 'uncle Murombo'). Traditionally personal names were more commonly used than surnames. In fact, surnames began as individuals' personal names or nicknames²⁹ (Adler 1978). Surnames that were nicknames are "descriptive of the ancestor's face, figure, temper, morals, tastes, clothes" (Adler 1978: 109), occupation, etc. Therefore, the use of surnames or TSN is more recent than the use of TPN. However, our data shows a restrictive use of TPN both in the family and the public domain.

The Johanne Masowe Chishanu (JMC), a popular African independent church in Zimbabwe, is well defined by its customary use of title plus personal name among its members especially. All women, including children are addressed and referred as ***madzimai + personal name*** (e.g. *Madzimai Esther*) and all men are addressed as ***madzibaba + personal name*** (e.g. *Madzibaba Ezra*), respectively. Members of this sect interviewed indicated that church members are free to use or shift to personalised address forms in private interaction such as in the family domain, but the use of TPN is a rule for interaction at the *Masowe* (church gathering), which everyone is obliged to observe³⁰.

²⁹ The system of surnames has remained largely stable in Zimbabwe for a long time. There are, however, interesting changes that took place after independence in 1980. For, example, some educated, professional or prominent women adopted the American hyphenated surname where they return their father's name and use it together with their husband's name, e.g. Kubi Chaza Indi, for various reasons. Research is yet to establish whether or not these women's children also adopt two surnames.

³⁰ Members of this church still use their surnames in communication with strangers and agents of formal institutions. In other words, their 'standard' identities are completely different from their informal identities. This is a common phenomenon in Shona onomastics which need to be researched on. For example, the Government gazettes and popularise 'standard' names of some places, both in urban and rural areas, but the local people coin their own names which they use for everyday references.

The JMC naming custom symbolises three related assumptions: spiritual egalitarianism, spiritual bonding derived from a new identity and an alienation from ancestral veneration presumed to be achieved through popularising one's ancestral name. *Madzibaba Tichaona* aptly explains:

7. Tose takaenzana pamberi pamwari uye takapiwa mutupo mumwe chete. Kana tichiti madzibaba kana madzimai ndiwo mutupo wedu iwoyo.
(Everyone is equal before God and we all share a new totem. The title madzibaba or madzimai is our totem.)

The JMC members' obliteration of their ancestral names (surnames) is best understood within the context of their perception of ancestral spirits and the link between the name and the person in African culture that we described in the introduction to this chapter. JMC, like many other African independent sects, believe that "*mweya yemadzinza*" (ancestral spirits) cause individual problems such as sickness, poverty, misfortune, etc. Given the power of the spoken word, particularly naming, addressing an individual by his/her ancestral name would be invoking his family spirits thus causing endless suffering to believers. Addressing or referring to someone by TPN symbolically removes that individual from the (ancestral) spotlight, and confuses *mweya yamadzinza*.

The JMC naming practices is consistent with the West African system of secret names (Alford 1988: 63, Obeng 1999: 88-89). In this custom, parents give a child a "derogatory-protective" or a "death-protective" name, which indicates its

worthlessness, to protect the child from death by tricking evil spirits into regarding the child as unimportant to them.

There are other terms of address that the JMC church uses for individuals who occupy certain exclusive role functionaries. For example, judges are referred to as *Vadare* (those who preside over the courts), *Vanzwivokudenga* (prophets- those who hear messages from heaven), *Varatidzwi/Varoti/Mazisoemasowe* (those who see visions). According to members of the church, the use of these terms celebrates individual members' spiritual gifts and roles in the church rather than status.

We observed that ordinary people also use TPN with children or with friends and peers. An older person can address a young person or a child by TPN, sometime to tease, rebuke or to humiliate him/her. A preschool teacher addresses a small boy who frequently forgets his pieces of clothing at school as *Mr. George* to mitigate a reprimand and to make the child feel big and responsible. Sometimes when a superior addresses a junior by TPN the address carries overtones of sarcasm and criticism.

5.4 Title and surname

The practice of addressing or referring to people by title plus surname (TSN) is foreign to Shona, as it is to most African languages. Its adoption is part of the influence of Western culture. It is therefore now common for Shona interlocutors to address or refer to each other by title and surname, particularly in the city. People normally use TSN in official or formal domains and occasionally in the domestic domain. The use of this form of address is both reciprocal and non-reciprocal.

Generally speaking, officials of the same age and rank who are mere acquaintances, but not used to each other or “at the initial stage of their contact” Oyetade 1995: 524) exchange mutual reciprocal TSN. They may eventually shift to other forms of address commensurate with their new or negotiated relationship. Usage is also dictated by context, that is situation of talk and other co-present participants, over-hearers or eavesdroppers. For example, we observed that most same-generation and rank teachers of either sex address each other by surname only (SN) in the staff room but exchange reciprocal TSN in meetings, and when talking to the school authorities, students or parents.

Normally a person with a high official status or rank receives TSN from one with a lower status. The form of address that the person of lower status receives from a superior depends on his/her age. We noted with respect to the use of personal names that, contrary to the American situation, where official status or rank conflicts with age, age takes precedent over rank. In this situation a younger boss gives an older subordinate of lower rank TSN and he/she receives the same form of address.

There are three categories of titles used in Shona: social, official and occupational. Chao (1956) observes similar categories for Chinese terms of address. Examples of social titles used with one’s surname are:

Table 2: Examples of social titles used with surname

<i>Title</i>	Example: Title + Surname	English Gloss
Mukunda	Mukunda Gumbo	Miss/Ms. Gumbo
Muzvare	Muzvare Gumbo	Miss/Ms. Gumbo
Baba	Baba Mate	Mr. Mate
Mai	Mate	Mrs/Ms Matare
Gogo	Gogo Mate	Mrs/Granny Mate
Sekuru	Sekuru Mate	Mr/granny Mate

Generally, Shona speakers use TSN to indicate respect and a deferential attitude toward the addressee or referent. Some speakers violate the prototypical conventions of addressing women in order to express respect for the addressee. This means that the speaker's intention overrides cultural conventions. For example, only married women are traditionally referred to by the title *Mai* plus husband's surname and unmarried women either receive *mukunda*, *muzvare*, teknonym or clan praise name and occupational title (see Chapter 6). But our data shows that in church and other social domains people tend to address adult unmarried women or women whose marital status is unknown by *Mai* plus surname.

As a result the title *Mai*, which normally connotes married status, both in the traditional and modern sense, is also used with one's maiden surname. It was quite clear from interviews that speakers break the conventional address rules in order to

save the addressee's face, since singleness is normally stigmatised. Speakers sometimes resolve this impasse by resorting to English titles since they seem to be semantically neutral with regards to social stigma.

However, the result is the same because adult unmarried women still receive the title *Mrs*, which is the English equivalence of *Mai*. The implication of this usage is that when *Mrs* is adopted into the Shona address system it performs a double role, indexing the addressee's marital status and indicating respect. The prominence of marital status and respect is also evident in the translation of *Ms* to Shona as *Mai* both in spoken and written discourse, "in spite of its intended meanings" (Kelly 1998: 2-5).

In fact, interviews with both men and women revealed generally negative attitudes towards *Ms*. Among the reactions are the statements that *Ms* is "difficult to pronounce," (Fatima, age 38), "is feminist and is used by women who are westernised and who dislike men" (Ephraim, age 39), "is used by women in marriages of conveniences, and by divorced and single older women who want to hide their marital status" (Florence, age 44). Although these folklinguistic attitudes could reflect misunderstandings of the meaning of *Ms* (Miller and Swift 1976, Kelly 1998), the general impression evident from these remarks is that womanhood in Shona society, perhaps as in many other societies, is a marked category, and the public, both male and female, tends to resist attempts to refer to women in an unmarked way.

The use of official titles plus surname is unproblematic. Of interest to us is the manipulation of some of the addresses in this category to express particular social meanings. Examples of title plus surname used in official contexts are:

Comrade + surname (unmarked for ZANU PF cadres)

MP + surname (reserved for members of parliament)

Baba/father + surname

Professor + surname

Chief + surname

When ZANU PF cadres use the term comrade + surname to address or refer to one another they are acknowledging their involvement in the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe's political independence and evoking a sense of patriotism or solidarity to the government's policies and philosophy. However, many ordinary Zimbabweans can use this term to address their peers to express a different sense of solidarity. Some use it to patronise ZANU PF carders and others use it jokingly or to lampoon pseudo-patriots. In fact, the term comrade has gained other meanings since Zimbabwe's attainment of independence³¹.

As we noted in our discussion on nicknames, official titles such as *MP* (member of parliament) and *Professor* are widely used as nicknames among intimates. With regards professional or acquired titles such as *Professor* and *Dr*, the holders of these titles overtly or covertly insist on their correct usage, especially by colleagues and students. We observed some academics taking colleagues and students to task for addressing them wrongly (e.g. *Mr* + surname in place of *Professor* + surname).

³¹ A diachronic study of Shona address and reference systems could shade more light on the changes in address and reference practices over a certain period since, change in language behaviour tend to follow the patterns of other linguistic and sociocultural change. Moreover, synchronic linguistic diversity is a source of diachronic change.

Occasions involving direct protest against incorrect use are not uncommon at the University of Zimbabwe, for instance. One Professor says that the misuse of address forms by insiders is an expression of contempt for the addressee or referent's achievement and naturally one would not take that kindly.

Of the three kinds of titles mentioned here, occupational titles have the highest frequency of occurrence, especially in service encounters. Some of the titles that precede surnames are; *doctor* (medical), *sister* (medical), *mufundisi* (pastor/Rev), *ticha* (teacher), *muporofita* (prophet), *muvangeri* (evangelist), *sekuru* (male diviner), *ambuya* (female diviner), etc. In face-to-face interaction where these titles are used vocatively, surnames are often omitted since the referent is clear from the context. We noticed gender differences in the use of the titles *mufundisi*, *muporofita*, *muvhangeri* and *sekuru* and *ambuya*.

The first occurring three terms are gender neutral, but when used in addressing male bearers of these titles, speakers tend to add a honorific prefix *Va-* (Sir/Mr), before the title and surname, (e.g. *VaMufundisi Machina*, *VaMuporofita Machina*, *VaMuvhangeri Machina*). In some occasions the addresses take a more complex form, e.g. Title +honorific prefix +title +surname (e.g. *Baba VaMuvhangeri Machina*). No such morphologically complex forms were used for female addressees bearing the same titles, except rare instances where the title (*A*)*mai* is put before the title + surname (e.g. *Amai mufundisi Machina*). This rarity of use is understood from the point of view of the possible ambiguity that could arise from the use of *amai*, which generically means Mrs. How do we explain the gender differences in the use of honorifics with titles described here? We agree with Frank and Anshen (1983: 13)

that “names are not indifferent labels, but have very real social significance for all human cultures.” Therefore the differential naming practices in Shona society clearly reflects the different statuses of women.

In traditional Christianity in Africa only men occupied the roles of pastor, prophet, evangelist, etc, and women would only derive their status from their husbands’ through marriage. In spite of the recent involvement of women in these roles, patterns of behaviour and naming have not yet adequately reflected this change.

5.5 Surname only

Surname only is an address practice used mostly by teachers at all levels of education, that is, primary, secondary, and tertiary, to address or refer to pupils or students. In the workplaces, too, same-sex or opposite sex colleagues of the same rank or generation mutually exchange surname only and some superiors use surname only to address their subordinates. When teachers and superiors use surname only for their students and subordinates they are probably indicating their power or superiority over them.

Although surnames are family names, they are widely used among the Shona as personal names in addressing people in informal situations as well. Friends and peers exchange them to mark their familiarity with each other. We noted that same generation female workmates address each other with surname only when their fathers and brothers or husbands who would normally bear those names are absent. When both daughter and father or brother and sister and husband and wife are present, the women lose their privilege to the surname only address to their male folk. This pattern of address reflects the traditional status hierarchies in which a woman’s status

is lower than that of her husband, brother or father within the family. Therefore the use of surname only by women could be a way of subverting this status hierarchy.

Our data shows a very high frequency of use of surname only as a reference term for superiors by subordinate. Students, workers, parishioners, political party members, government officials, etc. gossip about their superiors behind their backs all the time using their surnames as instruments for demeaning them. Only people who share the same views about the referent exchange this address pattern. Interviewees drawn from students, teachers, parishioners, and workers said that they use surname only for teachers, headmasters, pastors/ministers and bosses that they dislike and this form of address indicates their disrespect of and negative feeling towards the referent.

5.6 Full formal name

In the full formal name (FFN) type, two or three names comprising primary name, 'school' name, or both together with the surname are used to address a person. They may or may not be accompanied by title. Contrary to Oyetade's (1995: 525) claims of Yoruba, where he says that, "this pattern does not occur in ordinary day-to-day conversations between interlocutors, but is invariably found in formal situations like school, hospital and law courts." Our data shows that while this is also largely true of Shona, there are occasions where people use this address form in conversations.

Parents, older siblings and caregivers can use FFN to address children and peers, friends and romantic partners can also use it playfully. Some parents call a child vocatively by FFN to get his/her attention or to emphasise an order. A woman orders

her son, age 12, to wash the dishes and he ignores the order. The woman repeats the order saying,

8. Tatenda Moyo ndati geza ndiro.
(Tatenda Moyo, I said wash the dishes.)

Jimmy, age 33, joking with his friends at a club boasts about his drinking prowess saying,

9. Ndinombonzi aniko ini? Ndinonzi
Jimmy Jimalo, Chamunorwa. Hapana
zvamunondiita!
(What is my name by the way? I am
Jimmy Jimalo Chamunnorwa.)

None of you can surpass my record!). In this context, Jimmy uses FFN not only as a boasting device but to stress his point.

5.7 Teknonyms

According to Alford (1988: 90-91) the term teknonym usually refers to the custom of designating parents according to the names of their children (e.g. “father-of-X,” “mother-of-X”), but occasionally it may also refer to the practice of designating individuals according to any kin relationship (e.g. “grandparent-of-X,” “son-of-X,” “aunt-of-X”, etc.) In this study the term is used to refer to both senses.

The teknonymic custom is deeply embedded into both traditional and modern Shona culture in which great value is ascribed to the act of producing children. Use of teknonyms is not just a process of identification. Addressing or referring to an

individual using teknonyms serves both social and pragmatic functions. On a general level teknonyms show respect and acknowledgement of the addressee's achievement and maturity. Thus, any father or mother may expect to receive them, both from each other, and in general from friends, relatives and neighbours in informal situations.

However, our data shows that many young educated spouses normally use teknonyms when addressing or referring to each other in the presence of or in conversations with their children, parents, relatives with whom they have an avoidance relationship, neighbours and acquaintances. When addressing each other alone or sometimes in the presence of young children, young spouses tend to use reciprocal PN or endearments. Therefore, the use of a teknonym in this context is marked. We observed that teknonyms in this case might serve to mitigate a rebuke or order, to signal annoyance, disapproval, flattery or affection, (especially when the name or the child in the teknonym is a pet name), etc.

If we take the teknonymous terms of address as the "standard terms" (Dickey 2002: 279), then it follows from our observation that these "standard terms" are used less frequently to a spouse than to other family members. Maita, age 28, tells us that she uses her husband's FN or endearments (such as *shamwari* 'friend', honie) more frequently but sometimes uses teknonym with child's pet name plus endearment, to sound more romantic (e.g. *Baba vaGi shaz*). As Dickey (2002: 282) comments of addresses used in romantic interactions in Latin, "it is the shift in address, the use of a term which is slightly warmer than might be expected in that context, which indicates romance, rather than the use of any particular term." In this case *Gi* is short form for Grace and *shaz*, the slang form for *shamwari*. Maita says she uses this form of address

when she requests her husband to do household chores that he dislikes, such as helping with dishes.

We observed that some older spouses with grandchildren address each other either by their first or last child's name (e.g. *baba vanhingi* "father of so and so" or *mai nhingi* "mother of so and so," or by the name of a grandchild (especially the one living with them) (e.g. *sekuru vanhingi* "grandfather of so and so" or *mbuya vanhingi* "grandmother of so and so"), where *nhingi* stands for the name of the child or grandchild. This address merely indicates respect.

Teknonyms are very useful as alternates to personal names in avoidance relationships such as between in-laws. But, contrary to the rigidity many scholars claim of address practices between in-laws, our data reveals that in addition to teknonyms, Shona in-laws can use joking terms. For example, a mother-in-law might address her son-in-law as *vatezvara* (father-in-law) and the latter calls the former *muroora* (daughter-in-law) and a daughter-in-law might address her father-in-law as *mukuwasha* (son-in-law) while she receives *ambuya* (mother-in-law) from him. This relaxed address practice is based on the traditional view of *muzukuru murume* (one treats one's grandson as intimately as she treats her husband) or *muzukuru mukadzi* (one treats one's granddaughter as intimately as he treats his wife) or put simply, grandparents share a joking relationship with their grandchildren.

There are interactive occasions where an adult but childless woman is addressed by a "fictive teknonym" (Alford 1988: 159) or the name of an imaginary child. At times the childless woman is addressed by teknonym that refers to her kin relationship with

a relative's child (e.g. *mainini/maiguru/tete vanhingi* "aunt of so and so"). In both instances, the teknonym serves to de-emphasise the addressee's childless status.

We observed how children (between 4-10) use fictive teknonyms together with real and pretend names in their social play. In playing "house" (*mahumbwe*) children allocate themselves roles, then they use teknonyms, real and pretend names to delineate role relationships and to "mark context shifts within an activity" (Emihovich 1981: 189). Regarding the activity structure and the functions of names, the children addressed each other by their real names in three specific contexts: getting ready, during interruptions and in termination of the game. The use of the real names signalled "a shift from role-playing to discussions about actions and roles, to ward off interlopers and to return to the 'real' world" (Emihovich, 1994). Pretend names and teknonyms, in contrast, were used during the phase "playing the game," being the verbal enactment of pretend identities (Garvey 1977b).

We observed Rufaro, age 5, Idi, age 7, Ishmael, age 7 and Ben, age 9, playing house. Ben played the role of *baba* (father), Idi, *amai* (mother), Ishmael, *imbwa* (dog) and Rufaro, *mwana* (child), respectively. Ben was addressed as either *baba* (pretend name) or *baba aRufaro* (father of Rufaro, by Idi), Idi was addressed as *amai* or *mai Rufaro* (by Ben), Rufaro was addressed as *mwanangu* by both Ben and Idi, and Ishmael was addressed by everyone as *imbwa* during play. What was fascinating about the children's talk is how they adjusted their tone and behaviour to suit their roles, that is, playing within play.

We also noted how young unmarried romantic partners may address each other by fictive teknonyms involving names that they wish to give to their would-be children, terms that denote their desire to have children or self-styled names (e.g. *Mai/Baba vaZvichauya*, “Mother/Father of our future child” *Mai/Baba vaFuture* “Mother/Father of our future child”, *Mai/Baba vaSwinton* “Mother/Father of Swinton” (in memory of the girl’s room in Swinton hostel of the University of Zimbabwe where the lovers often met), etc.). These addresses indicate both romantic affection and play.

Some spouse, from all social classes and varied age groups who have twins address each other affectionately as *baba vamatuwinzi* (father of twins) or *mai matuwinzi* (mother of twins). Some members of the family may also use these terms to index their admiration and celebration of the spouses’ “rare gift” of having twins. In some families this teknonym is manipulated into a specialised or restricted code shared only by insiders. In an interview with one young man we learnt that members of his family affectionately address and refer to his older brother and his wife as *baba vatwo* (father of two) and *mai two* (mother of two) where two refers to their twin babies rather than to two ordinary siblings.

Finally, we observed that some married female friends or same generation close acquaintances working together in the same office or organisation sometimes address each other by the names of their children in informal conversations to indicate closeness and at times equality. When one talks to other colleagues about the other she shifts to TLN to signal formality. However, when one of the participants is a superior, she tends to resist exchanging teknonyms with junior friend or acquaintance, especially in the presence of other colleagues. One female manager claimed that

10. Anozondijarira ndikatadza
kumu*controla*.
(She will feel licensed to disrespect me
such that I will not be able to control
her.)

Since use of teknonyms normally signifies informality, giving it to a superior contradicts the power relations and the social distance that normally obtains between superiors and their subordinates.

It is important to note that the use of teknonyms by colleagues seems to be uncommon with men since no such occasions involving men were observed or reported. One possible sociological explanation is that culturally, women's identity is more tied to their motherhood status than men's and women tend to readily disclose their marital and motherhood status than their male counterparts. Shona society and folklore tends to encourage extramarital relations among men than women, since men are deemed to possess intuitive polygamous tendencies.

5.8 Summary

In this chapter, we have reiterated the arguments we raised in Chapter 4 about the pragmatic import of Shona address and reference terms. We began by explicating the African concept of naming with a view of providing a fuller picture of the social nature of names as address and reference acts. In arguing for the pragmatic value of proper names we illustrated that Shona speakers use names as devices for expressing certain value judgements or socially recognised relationships, which exist between the speaker and the address or referent.

The question of how and when a speaker chooses to use a personal name, title plus personal name, title plus surname, surname only, etc, has been addressed. Contextual factors (such as topic, setting), aspects of relationships between users and hearers of address terms (status, intimacy, kinship), and pragmatic factors (social meaning, speaker's intention, etc) were obvious parameters for the uses, interpretation and meanings of address and reference terms. We have seen that social factors of this type make sense only against a culture-specific backdrop of premises about personhood and relationships. For example, respect is an important feature of the Shona system of address based on assumptions about relationships and acceptable conduct in those relationships. We also noted that rules of respect determine how Shona speakers rank ascribed status (e.g. age and marital status) higher than rank or occupational status in address usage and how they perceive other relationships as taboo. Young people's use of older people's personal names or surname only as reference terms behind their backs and the failure of the universal personal name policy are evidence of the dominance of rules of respect and politeness in Shona address behaviour.

Another example of how rules of respect govern the Shona speakers' choice of address terms is the use of the title *Ms* for women, its relationship with *Mrs* and its translated meaning. We noted the general negative attitude towards the use of this title. In addition to the debate about its intended versus social meaning, the trouble is that not many people know how to pronounce it since it lacks a vowel and has two consonants, which according to Shona phonetics (and English phonetics also) cannot be pronounced together. The printed word may show the distinction between *Ms* and

Mrs, but the spoken word does not. Hence, whether one is officially referred to as *Ms* or *Mrs*, many Shona speakers address them simply as *Amai* to index respect.

Some of the address and reference occasions that we described, for example, the use of surname only by women friends and peers, violates existing cultural conventions but serve important pragmatic purposes. An element of individual creativity is also evident in the playful and fictive use of teknonyms, title plus personal name and vocatives. For instance, it was clear that the use of personal names as vocatives yield a rich repertoire of emotionally coloured terms of address. In such cases, the speaker's intended meaning determines the choice and use of a name. In chapter 6, we shall demonstrate in more detail how Shona speakers use names creatively to achieve pragmatic import in varied interactive occasions.

CHAPTER 6

CREATIVE NAMING

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 (five) we suggested that proper names are the standard form of address or reference. This implies that there are other alternative forms. As in Chapter 4 (four), in the preceding chapter we highlighted the function of terms of address and reference and factors that constrain the choice between alternatives. By so doing we stressed the point we made in Chapter 1 (one) that using a term of address or reference does not have a specific “meaning.” It is the selection of that term of address or reference, rather than others, which might have been used, which convey (social) meaning. In this chapter, we shall demonstrate the value of creativity in address usage, the shift from using the obvious naming strategies to using more inventive ones.

In this chapter, we look at the use of nicknames, clan praise-names and descriptive addresses. What these names have in common is that they are all acquired and used informally and they offer a unique example of how the Shona use language creatively, sometimes, “free from the normal phonological and semantic constraints pertaining to other aspects of language use (Van Langendonck 1983, cited in de Klerk and Bosch 1997, de Klerk and Bosch 1996).

In Chapter 5 we discussed the use of professional/occupational titles often used together with a known addressee or referent’s surname. When the surname is not

mentioned, the assumption is that it is understood and is only left out to achieve a pragmatic intent. However, there are several occasions where it becomes necessary to address/refer or identify a stranger or a person whose name the speaker does not quite remember. These occasions include brief dealings with service providers, vendors or other strangers one needs to get the attention of in public. One may need to talk to a man or woman who sells ice-cream or milk on the street in a polite but unambiguous way. In this case a name is neither relevant nor important. Two types of descriptive addresses are used: occupational names, with or without a title of respect, and kinship terms with or without aspects of physical appearance.

In our discussion of personal names we foregrounded the influence of culture on patterns of name usage. We acknowledged that members of a dyadic relationship depend mostly on the rules of society to determine their rights, privileges and obligations in using and/or receiving personal names in varied relationships. It would be incorrect, however to assume that dyads rely exclusively on the collective culture in determining their address behaviour.

It will be clear from this chapter that use of nicknames, clan praise-names and descriptive terms allows speakers to modify the cultural blueprint and build on it as they construct a relationship that suits their “particular situations, dispositions, and needs” (Bell and Healey 1992: 308). Their usages reflect improvisation and innovation – what McCall (1988: 474) refers to as “creative compromises within the institutionalised form.” The innovation and creativity is attributable to the informality of relationships in which the address and reference terms are used and the informality of the circumstances in which they are acquired.

We shall make elaborate comments on nicknames since they take up the greatest space in this chapter because of their widespread occurrence in our data. Bestowing nicknames and using them as terms of address and reference involves innovation and creativity in that the names

Offer a rare example of people using language creatively in accordance with a logic that is not laid down from outside; they are means of displaying linguistic licence, of breaking the rules freely and getting away with it. They are an escape vent for creativity, and an avenue for the expression of some of the pure enjoyment that the sounds of words can give (de Klerk and Bosch 1997: 95).

It will be clear from some nicknames derived from personal names that the phonological aspect of nicknames provides evidence for combining enjoyment and meaning through language play.

Our analysis of data surveyed for this study attempts to answer two questions: What is the scope of nickname use and what functions do nicknames serve in interaction? We will start answering the first question.

De Klerk and Bosch (1997), Bell and Healey (1992), Chaika (1989) and Adler (1978) classify nicknames under a set of vocabulary used by dyads in intimate relationships. Commenting on nicknaming among Xhosa-speaking children and adolescents in South Africa, De Klerk and Bosch note that people who form part of the intimate linguistic subcultures to which the bearer belongs bestow nicknames on him/her. Central to this perspective is the view that dyadic relationships are “mini-cultures”

(Baxter 1987), with their own values, meanings, vocabularies and rituals. These “mini-cultures” dovetail with what Wood (1982) calls “relational cultures”. Wood defines relational culture as “a unique-to-the-relationship world order” that comprises “a privately transacted system of understandings that coordinates attitudes, actions, and identities of participants in a relationship” (76). This definition is consistent with one that Baxter (1987) offers. Baxter considers a relational culture as a “system of meanings created and maintained by its partners” (262).

Bell and Healey’s examples of this species of relationships are “friendships and romantic ties” (308). Chaika (1989: 68) remarks, “... nicknames are often used among close friends or members of teams,” and according to de Klerk and Bosch (1997: 292) nicknames “evolve spontaneously among small groups of people who know each other intimately, and are frequently indicative of a need to express particular attitudes and feelings.” Chaika’s definition is rather restrictive but de Klerk and Bosch’ seems inclusive.

6.2 Nicknames

The old English term *ekenname* (‘also name’) (de Klerk and Bosch 1997: 95), Van Langendonck’s (1983: 644) term ‘by-name’ and the Shona term *zita redunhurirwa* (Kahari 1990: 128) emphasise the role of such “optional and transient”³² names. Nicknames may evolve at different stages of a person’s life, allowing some choice as regards how one is addressed.

³² Nicknames are referred to as transient because they may be short-lived. Some are used as address terms in certain settings and not in others, and sometimes at a certain stage in one’s life and then abandoned or forgotten at a later stage. However, some nicknames may replace one’s official name permanently and others become surnames.

Our data reveals that in early childhood, nicknames are given and used by parents, siblings, relatives and caregivers within the family unit. In adolescence, peers and teachers may name and address children by nicknames and in adulthood, peers, intimates (lovers and friends) and sometimes acquaintances, address and refer to members of their relational culture by nickname in appropriate situations. Where the target of nicknaming is an older person, a superior or a person with whom the speaker(s) shares an avoidance relationship, nicknames are not usually used in the presence of that person. They are used behind the bearers' backs. Our data resonate with Mashiri's (1999) observations on Shona and Blount's (1993) on Luo, that nicknames can be either self-ascribed or assigned by others.

Most of the nicknames that appear in our data derive from personal names, surnames, physical and personality traits, idiosyncrasies, ability, habits, events in one's life, occupation or geographical location or origin.

In this thesis, we classify nicknames according to their function as address and reference resources. Looking at function provides insights into the pragmatic value of using nicknames instead of other names and the social meanings of the nicknames. The value of nicknames is closely tied to the complex social networks in which they operate, and the meanings are often dependent on the context of use (Leslie and Skipper 1990). Nicknames serve a wide range of functions (Holland 1990: 256, Alford 1988).

6.2.1 *Affection and positive feelings*

Our data shows three types of nicknames that perform an affectionate function: children's nicknames, romantic nicknames and nicknames for public personalities. Of these three, children's nicknames have the highest frequency of occurrence. According to Jespersen (1954: 33),

Every family has a certain tendency to acquire a language of its own with its own expressions, pet names and nicknames, and indeed with words and sentences of its own which are either not known in that particular meaning outside the family circle.

We noted that children's nicknames that have the highest frequency of occurrence are "pet names" (Morgan, et al 1979, de Klerk and Bosch 1997). These are names invented by parents for their young children and are often used by parents, siblings and caregivers within the family setting. Two types of pet names are common: those derived from a child's personal name and those coined from a child's social behaviour. Examples of the former are: *Popo* < *Portia*, *Chibhe* < *Belinda*, *Momo* < *Memory*, for females and *Silver* < *Silvester*, *Titi* < *Tinashe*, *Nashe* < *Panashe*, *Tadi-boy* < *Tadiwa*, *Tamezh* < *Tamirirashe* and *Tendi* < *Tendai*, for males. The phonological and morphological manipulation of the personal names evident in these nicknames is not just for enjoyment (Bolinger 1984) but enhances affective meaning.

These names act primarily as signals of love and affection and can be used in the presence of strangers or acquaintances. We observed how family members could also use these names to achieve particular pragmatic goals. Amina, age 32, orders her son, Panashe, with eating disorders, to finish his breakfast;

1. Nashe, poriji iroro ngaripere
tione.
(Nashe, make sure you finish
that porridge.)

Learnmore, age 28, rebukes his 2 year old daughter Portia, playing with television switch buttons,

2. Popo, chaya!
(Popo, stop that or I will smack you!)

In both cases the pet names *Nashe* and *Popo* are used to introduce directives, resulting in the directives being gentle.

We noted that members of the same family might not address a child by one and the same nickname. Some are used by parents and never by siblings and vis-versa, while only grandparents use others. Some of the pet names derived from a child's social behaviour illustrate this point. In an interview, Rudo, age 36, says that her mother, age 56, nicknamed her grandson, Michael, age 5, *Mr. Smart* from his love for jacket and tie as his Sunday best. Although the rest of the family members know this nickname, they never address or refer to him by it. Only the grandmother addresses him as such to index positive feelings towards the child's habits. Charles's (age 30), daughter, *Chiedza*, age 9, is tall, slim and very fashion conscious. Her two younger brothers tease her as *chidhoma* (a ghost), from the make-up that she wears, but her mother addresses her affectionately as *Chiye*. Her father however, affectionately calls and refers to her as *Miss Malaika*³³.

³³ Malaika means angel in KiSwahili. In 2001 Ernest Coovi Adjovi initiated and became the founder and Chairman of the Trust that set out to run an exclusively African beauty pageant based on African perceptions of beauty. The rationale for running this beauty contest is that traditional contests have

It appears that as children grow into adolescence they become rather ashamed of their pet names and distaste their use in the presence of outsiders or outside the familial circle. Some adolescents used our interview to complain against their parents' occasional lapse into nicknaming in the presence of "*vamwe vanhu*" (others.) Yet many parents seem to be aware of drawing the lines "between the inner, private familial circle and society at large, between the private and the public" (Blum-Kulka and Katriel 1991: 68). Andrew, age 45, says that his 14 year old son is called *James* at school, but at home his parents address and refer to him alternatively as *Jemu* (from *James*) and *mudhara* (old man). Andrew stresses,

3. I always call him *James* in front of others. I am aware it is embarrassing for him to be addressed as *Jemu* or *Mudhara* among his friends.

In some of our data, there is evidence of nicknames that young lovers (spouses and others with romantic interest) use as part of their "restricted codes of communication" (Bell, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Gore 1987: 48). In an interview, a young woman says that she calls her husband *doctor* when they are alone to tease him for his self-professed knowledge of home-based treatments of colds. Anna, age 23, a university student says that she addresses her lover as *50 cents* to praise him for his sweet talk that resembles the love hip hop lyrics of the American Hip hop musician "50 cent". Daniel, age 39, says that he passionately addresses his wife as *Gadhijeri* (Jail guard) for insisting on him drinking from home, Pepetua, age 21, tells us that her boyfriend

been run by Westerners and are based on Western principles of beauty. Hence, the white female would invariably be the icon of beauty. White women would always outclass their African counterparts in the contests. The Miss. Malaika beauty pageant therefore celebrates African beauty and allows African women to compete among themselves and be judged by African parameters.

addresses her as *Babyface* and Samson, age 35, is addressed by his wife as *Dangwe rangu* (my first-born child).

Commenting on the use of idiomatic communication between young lovers in America, Bell et al (1987) say that nicknames, for instance, give a partner the opportunity to express to the other that he or she is considered “one-of-a-kind”. This implies that lovers use nicknames to express their affection of each other and perhaps, also to create bonding. The nicknames, like other restricted (private) labels, may play an important role in relational development since bonding requires partners to “extricate each other from broad social categories and indicate the uniqueness of each other’s self through positively evaluative and identity confirming commentary” (Wood 1982: 79). This means that in addition to indexing affection, nickname use in romantic relationships indicates solidarity.

Shona people have nicknames for the great, the famous or the notorious in different contexts and relationships. However, nicknames with the highest occurrence in our data are from politics and soccer. Politics and sport (particularly soccer) are very popular with most Zimbabweans, including the Shona. Many people have their own heroes and villains and they use nicknames to express their positive feelings or their affection towards their heroes. The proliferation of nicknames appears to be directly correlated with the level of social interest. As de Klerk and Bosch (1997: 113) observe of the use of nicknames among English adolescents in South Africa, the more interest generated in a particular individual the greater the likelihood of proliferation of terms of address.

Nicknames of politicians and soccer players are used mostly as reference terms among friends, peers, or audiences that share the same attitude towards the referents as the speaker. Many Zimbabweans, including the public media, refer(ed) to the late Vice-President Joshua Nkomo as *Father Zimbabwe* or *Mudhara* (Old man) (*uMdala*, in Ndebele) to register their admiration of his exemplary and nationalistic leadership³⁴. These names also celebrate(d) Nkomo's stewardship in the armed struggle of Zimbabwe.

Robert Mugabe has been Zimbabwean President since his party's historic and resounding election victory in 1980³⁵. Since that election, his party ZANU PF uses a *jongwe* (a cock) as its election symbol. Many ZANU PF supporters regard Mugabe as the party icon and affectionately refer to him as *Jongwe*. Others refer to him as *Bob*, the institutionalised nickname for Robert in the American naming system.

Many soccer players in Zimbabwe have pet names that team-mates, fans or commentators coin or use to address or refer to them at appropriate occasions. A pet name may be derived from a player's style (e.g. Wifred Mugayi – *Silver Fox*, from his scoring prowess), commitment, (e.g. Peter Ndlovu – *Captain Fantastic*, from his commitment in the national team), position (e.g. Dumisani Mpofo – *Commando*, steadfast defender) and events in the player's life (e.g. George Mbando – *Zambia*, from scoring a goal that led to the under 23 team's victory against the Zambian team in the 1990s).

³⁴ In the 1950s when Joshua Nkomo was a trade union leader and then from the early 1960s to independence a prominent nationalist leader in Zimbabwe, those who supported him addressed him as 'Father Zimbabwe' or *Mudhara* or *umdhala*, in Ndebele.

³⁵ In the first democratic elections held in Rhodesia in 1980 the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU (PF)) swept the board of 80 black members, winning 57 seats against 20 by ZAPU's Joshua Nkomo, and 3 by Bishop Abel Muzorewa's United African National Council (UANC) (Weiss 1994: 7).

This naming practice resembles the Shona traditional nicknaming of famous individuals. Pongweni (1983: 20) reminds us that traditionally, prowess in hunting and distinction in farming or good manners earned one a name. Most of the soccer nicknames have the same function as these prowess-related names. Because the name generally celebrates the addressee's or referent's dexterity and talent, the player readily accepts it and the use of that name motivates him to display exceptional skill (Mashiri 1999: 99). The naming practice pertaining to the national team is not unique. The practice is widespread in individual teams, at street level, school or club level. A separate study would describe the nicknames of soccer players in different contexts and relate their social meanings to the circumstances of their use.

6.2.2 Social demarcation and solidarity

When used with social equals within a sub-culture, a nickname usually acts as a cohesive social device indicating "social demarcation" (Blum-Kulka and Katriel (1991: 66) and solidarity. As Skipper (1986: 137) notes in his study of coal miners and their nicknames:

Groups which face an external threat to the group itself, or to individual members, and which can best maintain the existence of the group and the safety of its members through a cooperative effort, are likely to have a degree of solidarity.

Nicknames help to construct and are symbols of such solidarity. Skipper found that their use was common practice in coal miners, serving as the badge of a miner's acceptance and membership in the work group – "a mechanism of integration which contributed to both production and safety in the mines" (Holland 1990: 258).

In our data no solidarity enhancing nicknames were found among female dyads. Only male nicknames were found. A group of street children patronising the parking slots in the area bordering Union avenue/First street to Union avenue/Second street on one end and Jaison Moyo avenue/First to Jaison Moyo/Second street, on the other end are determined to protect this area as their sphere of influence form other groups. The more influential members of the group have nicknames. Jack, age 16, calls himself and is addressed by others as *Taison*, Chandafrica, age 14, is addressed as *Chibhanzi*, and Naison, age 11, is called *Hondo yeminda*. *Taison* is derived from Jack's fighting prowess that he displayed when his group displaced the one that occupied the area before them. To the younger members of the group the name assures them of safety under Jack's leadership. *Chibhanzi* comes from the slang term for money popular among Zimbabweans of all backgrounds. Explaining the meaning of the name in an interview, Chandafrica says,

4. *Area ino ine chibhanzi
mudhara, munhu wese
anofanira kugara akangwarira
izvozvo.
(We get good money from this
area sir and every member of
the group must guard it
jealously.)*

The name itself is an instrument of solidarity since it encourages members to fight anyone who invades their source of survival. *Hondo yeminda* reminiscent of the government land redistribution programme cliché seem to legitimise any acts of violence that the group could engage in to protect their territory.

Earlier we mentioned how the use of some nicknames is restricted to the family unit or to intimate dyads and how these nicknames can become restricted codes. In the case of the family unit, the confinement of certain nicknames to that unit both reflects and reinforces the existence and the continued cultivation of a shared family culture, sketching the boundaries of the family as a social unit and enhancing a sense of solidarity among its members. But, our data reveals that even within the family unit, some members may confine the use of yet another member's nickname to themselves, especially when the use of the name violate rules of respect or is offensive. Grace, age 21, says that she and her three younger sisters refer to their mother as *Kabegi* (Small bag) from her habit of carrying her little handbag on her even to the bathroom. Grace tells us that since their mother is not aware of this nickname, and because the name is derived from a common noun that denotes a commonly used object, the siblings can refer to their mother in her presence without her knowing.

Similarly, Steven, age 16, a high school student says that students in his Geography class nicknamed their teacher *However* from his regular use of the word and their headmaster *Chikwama* (purse) from his pot belly that looks like a bag of coins. Members of a Pentecostal congregation in Harare refer to one prominent preacher as *Madhimoni* (demons) from his habit of scorning demons in all his sermons and the humorous way he pronounces the word.

What seems to be clear in all the cases cited above is that those using the nicknames are all social inferiors and the bearers of the nicknames are superior in terms of both age and rank. The rules of address would not allow them to address the referents directly using the nicknames. It is also clear that the nicknames are offensive. Hence,

their covert usage can only occur in the company of like-minded people: siblings, classmates, and church-mates. If we compare these like-minded people to friends, then Dorian's (1970) claim that "one way in which a group of friends express social solidarity is in freely using certain offensive by-names among themselves" (313), applies to them as well. McGreachy (1978) in studying student nicknames for college lecturers (faculty), notes that nicknames can "serve to integrate the community" (282).

Besides people related through their institutional membership, close friends also have names that they use privately to refer to people outside their relationship. These nicknames often reflect the friends' attitude towards the bearer(s) of the nickname(s). It seems that use of nicknames for others is more prevalent among female friends of all age groups (from adolescents to adults) and social classes than men. One possible explanation for this imbalance is that Shona women tend to use more covert language forms and engage in gossip than men. This hypothesis is consistent with Bell and Healey's results in their study of Idiomatic communication in friends' relational cultures. Their study reveals that at one university students named a certain room in which a group of female friends gathered for gossip "Bitch nitch".

The nicknames for others are of two types. First, there are nicknames for specific individuals. For instance, two female friends used *Svikiro* (spirit medium) to reference a female acquaintance who distastes using perfumes, while another pair referred to a janitor at their hostel as *Matissue* (tissues) from his role of distributing tissue rolls to students living in the hostel. The second category is composed of nicknames that denote an entire class of individuals (see the of insults in Chapter 9). At a private

college in Harare, two female friends refer to any cute guy who might qualify as a potential formal date as *Muchato* (a wedding) to index their wish for a stable date that could culminate into marriage. Nicknames that derogated men judged to be sleazy (e.g. *Matigimu*, after a character in Chidzero's novel Nzvengamutsvairo) or unsophisticated (e.g. *Adam*, after the biblical Adam) were also reported. For one pair of male friends at the University of Zimbabwe, *N'anga* (traditional healers) were pompous students in the medical faculty.

However, friends often have nicknames for each other. Examples of nicknames for female friends are *J Lo* (after American singer Jennifer Lopez), *Mai Mufundisi* (pastor's wife), *Princess Di* (after the late Princess Diana), *Big mamma* (after the main character in the movie Big mamma's house). Male nicknames include *Rodger Miller* (after the Cameroonian soccer legend), *War veteran*, *Madzibaba*, *Razaro* (after the biblical Lazarus) and *Big cat* (after a lion/cheater). In addition to the affective meanings of the nicknames in each interactive encounter, friends' nicknames for each other or for others maintain the boundary between friends and those who are not friends and reinforce bonds between those who use them.

People from the same ethnic group, those who share the same totem or who originate from the same home area tend to exchange nicknames that express a sense of belonging and solidarity. Some young men working as construction assistants to and coming from Chipinge as Mathias, age 44, address him as *Mutape* (commonly used in Chipinge to refer to a headman). We observed that some men from Manicaland address each other as *Wasu* or *Samaz* (slang form of *SaManyika*). As Pfukwa (2003:

5) notes, these names are used exclusively to refer to men since the title *Sa-* (lit. Mr.) is a masculine term.

Some men address each other by their praise-names so frequently that they almost function as nicknames (e.g. *Sinyo* < *Sinyoro*, *Mhofu*, *Musayigwa*, *Madyira* < *Madyirapazhe*). Speakers often use these nicknames as conflict resolving devices, negotiation instruments or patronising tools. Use of nicknames on such occasions evoke feelings of patriotism and solidarity and implies entitlement to certain rights and obligations.

6.2.3 *Social control*

Generally speaking Shona people seem to rely most heavily on nicknaming practices for defining inappropriate or excessive behaviour, uphold cultural ideals and politely rebuking deviant behaviour or personalities. In the broadest sense, the function of social control performed by the use of a nickname is not different in essence from the social power encoded in choice of address terms in general (Blum-Kulka and Katriel 1991: 68). There is a power potential embedded in nickname systems, which speakers can exploit in dynamic ways at any given discoursal instance. Normally, only people endowed with power (through age, rank or role status) or equals may use language to control the behaviour of others. But, nicknaming seems to provide licence to social inferiors to express their opinion, mood and elocutionary intent towards superiors.

Nicknames can perform a social control function in the family circle, between individuals (equals and non-equals), acquaintances, and institutional relations (e.g.

teachers, students and headmasters). Our interest here is in showing that alternations in naming practices can serve as important indexes in the language of social control.

In the family unit, parents, siblings, caregivers and relatives address children by certain nicknames to achieve the control function. Esther, age 36, says that she addresses her niece, age 11, as *Madhafinya* (the fat one), “to discourage her overeating tendencies since she is already overweight.” Sam, age 40, addresses his son, age 12, who is a prefect at his school as *Mr. Prefect*, to rebuke him for controlling his younger siblings. Two adult daughters call their mother *Mother Teresa* (after the late humanitarian legend of India) when trying to talk her out of excessive generosity. In these instances, nicknames are used either as “aggravators” (intensifiers) or “mitigators” (softeners) of utterances meant to direct people’s behaviour. Our observation of Esther and Sam’s interactions with their children revealed that when calling these children to order, they say out the children’s nicknames with a raised voice and an emphatic intonation.

Esther says that she often addresses her niece as *Madhafinya* when she orders her to stop eating “junk food”. The use of a nickname with a directive aggravates the coercive impact of the directive. For example, according to Esther, *Madhafinya* at times refuses to eat her regular meals as a reaction to the directive,

5. *Madhafinya usadya izvo!*
 (Madhafinya stop eating that junk food.)

This example illustrates that preceding a directive with a nickname violates Brown and Levinson’s (1978) face maintenance requirement that “people will generally

proceed with circumspection and due regard for the feeling of others” (Wood and Kroger 1991: 147) and conforms to the Gricean rule of clarity (Grice 1975). This directness is common in utterances directed at children in Shona culture.

Our data also revealed that names of lower class, witty but scruffy television drama characters such as *Gringo*, *Paraffin*, *Bhasiriyo*, serve as handy control devices for children. Once a child is nicknamed *Gringo*, *Paraffin* or *Bhasiriyo* he/she makes an effort to reform immediately.

In the classroom conversation we recorded from some schools (especially secondary), most nicknames meant for social control come from villain characters in the students’ literature prescribed books and local television drama characters. A drunkard teacher who dated schoolgirls was referred to as *Gararirimo* (after a drunkard and polygamous character in Zvarevashe’s novel Kurauone) and female students addressed a chauvinist male student as *Babamukuru* (uncle) (after the character Babamukuru in Tsitsi Dangarembwa’s novel Nervous Conditions). Teachers tended to give some students critical names (e.g. *Sleepy*, for a docile female student; *big bossman*, for a primary school boy who bullied other pupils; *Maths*, for a student who did badly in Mathematics and *door keeper*, for a student who always got the worse results in end of term tests). Mike, age 37, a teacher at a secondary school in Chitungwiza said that students’ nicknames given by teachers tend to decrease with student age because in the cities teachers may be attacked by older male students for addressing them by scathing names.

Where the bearer of a nickname is an older person, the users may attach a title of respect to the nickname. Samuel, age 47, a guard at a brick moulding company was popular with his colleagues for soliciting for money from customers, saying,

6. Hamusi kundisiirawo yebhotoro chete
here nhasi?
(Are you not giving me money just
enough to buy a bottle of soft drink?)

From this habit Samuel earned himself the nickname *Kabotoro*. But, the younger colleagues softened their utterances by calling him *VaKabotoro*. In an interview, Samuel remarks that at first he resisted the nickname but it stuck to him although he had since stopped his habit from shame. Some of his colleagues say that Samuel cannot ask for money even from his fellow workers, because whenever he does, the respondent shifts from his formal name to his nickname in the response. The use of a nickname preceding an utterance serves as a first signal for the control act to come and switching from formal name to nickname aggravates the speaker's refusal to honour the request.

It appears that critical nicknames can run the whole gamut of group behavioural norms, nothing seems to be excluded from driving in the stakes of acceptable limits (Kehl 1971: 160), the nicknamed person acts as a negative model for others.

6.2.4 *Intimate play*

Most of the address and reference occasions described earlier involve the serious side of everyday personal relationships. Yet, fun and relaxation are the most powerful predictor variables in explaining relationship progression (Baxter 1992: 336). Intimate

play is one important facet of less serious, everyday side of personal relationships and nickname use helps us to understand it. Before we discuss examples of nickname use in intimate play, let us briefly outline what play entails and what functions it serves.

According to Baxter (1992: 337), from a relational cultures perspective, play is a particularly significant resource for constructing the systems of meaning that constitutes personal relationships. Scholars have suggested that play performs a number of functions for relationship parties. Only those relevant to the use of nicknames are summarised here. First, play is viewed as an index of intimacy, suggesting to the parties that their relationship is one of synchrony, closeness and intimacy (Bendix 1987, Betcher 1981, Oring 1984). Second, play is perceived as a successful moderator of tensions and conflict, allowing the relationship parties to manage sensitive and conflictual issues without fear of risking the underlying relational stability (Bendix 1987, Betcher 1988). Third, play is assumed as a “low risk” or safe communication strategy that allows parties to say things that might otherwise prove embarrassing to them. There are many more functions (cf. Baxter 1992) and obviously, these functions are interdependent on one another.

We found that intimate play among the Shona is acceptable and frequently occurs between same-sex and opposite sex close friends, married and unmarried romantic partners and parents and their young children. We noted that the frequency of nickname use increases and the constraints on this practice decreases from same-sex to opposite sex close friends. Contrary to other relationships mentioned here where nickname use is reciprocal, only the parent uses a child’s nickname in a playful manner.

Two types of nicknames that serve an intimate play function were noted: those used by a group of friends in a humorous and jocular way and those that are sensitive and only used by very close selected friends. The first category emerges at school or work places among peers who know the bearer well.

Male names given by friends display an enormous amount of humour, creativity and topicality. There are names based on a pun or prosody of an individual's own name (e.g. *Mabirds* < Mashiri, *Dutch* < Duche, *President* < Robert, *Fatso* < Francis). Other names are based on the bear's behaviour (e.g. *Special meat*, for a boy with feminine traits, *Gondoharishari*, for a promiscuous young man, *Mapitikoti*, for a man who likes to hang around with women). Although the primary function of these names is play, they often serve a didactic function as well, especially where the bearer's behaviour deviates from the norm.

Nicknames exchanged between female friends are slightly less daring although we noted some imaginative names (e.g. *Jam puff*, after her popularity with men; *Bubbles*, after her entertaining talking style; *Headgirl*, after her domineering attitude; *Fattie*, after her chubby body). Like the male nicknames, some of the female names also have undertones of social control. We noted that female friends tend to use nicknames derived from their personal names (e.g. *Kuku* < *Kudzai*, *Tate* < *Tatenda*, *Kwini* < *Aquilina*). These are frequently affectionate.

The playful nature of nicknames is more explicit in the use of two-word names (e.g. *Doctor Love*, *Big Sam*, *Uncle Tich*, *Madzibaba Johane* for males and *Untie Pee*, *Miss*

Edgars, Beauty Queen, Princes Mary for females). Related to this type of nickname is the compound nickname, that is, a compound noun phrase used to address or refer to two people sharing a particular relationship. Parishioners at a Methodist congregation in Mbare often engage in social play with their old pastor and his wife since they regard them almost as grandparents. In situations that require formal address, the parishioners address the pastor and his wife as *Mufundisi namai* (Reverend and Mrs), but a switch to the nickname *Timmy naBonzo* (after a television comedy featuring very close and popular friends), even in that formal interaction indexes intimate play.

Sensitive nicknames are either those given and used by the bearer's foes or those that refer to or are derived from delicate occurrences. Tamuka's (age 30) relatives coined the nickname *Vakadzidza* (the educated one) for her and use it behind her back to spite her for what they call westernised attributes. Tamuka is aware of the nickname and gets annoyed by its use. She informed us that when she acts western in the company of her husband, he sometimes teases her addressing her by this nickname. According to Tamuka, the intimacy level with her husband and the awareness that "he is only joking anyhow" makes her accept the nicknaming as play. In fact, she says, this nicknaming by someone close to her helps to release the tension caused by the social meanings the nickname derives from its use by other people.

A male colleague says that he had conflict with his wife over how she should address him in response to his calls. As a traditionalist Christian he insists he that his wife responds to his calls with *Shewe*³⁶ (master) "as Sarah did to Abraham". His modern

³⁶ *Shewe* is a contracted version of the noun phrase *Ishe iwe* (lit. You chief). *Ishe* means chief in Shona. Its use predates Western Christianity. Traditionally aunts and mothers socialised young women to address or respond to their husbands' summons using this term to index their reverence for and subordination to them. With the advent of Western Christianity, many churches perpetuated the

wife, Christian though, differs vehemently and their close family friends have often intervened to cool down tempers. The female family friend nicknamed our colleague *Shewe* and uses it in a light-hearted manner in the presence of the bearer's wife. This playful use of the nickname, says our colleague, has helped ease the conflict between him and his wife. However, despite the level of intimacy, the name bearer's mood at the time of name use is important. An apprehensive mood could actually exacerbate the conflict.

A whole neighbourhood refers to Tendai, age 34, as *Reuben Barwe* (after the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation chief correspondent), for her gossiping tendencies. None except her close friends address her directly by that name. When they do, the atmosphere is punctuated with laughter and pushing and shoving, characteristic of game-based play. Yassin (1978), studying personal address among the Kuwait Arabic, similarly notes the use of nicknames between close friends. Such names, often based upon an individual's behaviour or other personal attributes, imply a friendship more intimate than that shown by personal names.

Sometimes when parents are in a happy and relaxed mood they playfully use their young children's names, even the more sensitive nicknames. James, age 38, says that his 5 year old son wets his bed and family members often address him as *Zi* or *Ziwozhe* (one who wets his bed) as a way of appealing to his ego. The nicknames make him vulnerable, hence he cries against its use. But, there are times, says James,

patriarchal subordination of women by citing Old Testament relational models. More research is needed to establish the effect of the feminist ideology and urbanisation/modernity on this address practice, but the low frequency of occurrence of the term *shewe* among Harare female dwellers probably indicate women's resistance to its use.

when the bearer accepts the nickname as indexing play and joins the parents in laughter.

The nicknaming practice between intimates sometimes overlaps with insulting that we discuss in Chapter 9. The major difference is that while nicknames may stick or last a lifetime, insulting labels may just be momentary and ephemeral.

6.2.5 *Demeaning/disrespecting*

We observed that some workers refer to their unpopular employers or superiors by scathing nicknames when talking among themselves, or when the name bearer is within over-hearing range. Some University of Zimbabwe employees refer to their Vice-Chancellor as *Changamire Chipfupi* (the short chief) to indicate their negative attitude towards “his hard-handedness”; students at a female hostel call their “mean and strict” warden *boarding mistress* as an expression of their dislike of her behaviour, and workers at a bakery refer to their manager as *Dyke* (after the former Rhodesian army chief Colonel Dyke) for his military management style.

In a country like Zimbabwe, which is fraught by racial and political tension³⁷, and in which colonialism and party politics have caused enormous damage to human relationships, the use of nicknames as critical or demeaning devices becomes significantly high. Some employees refer to white employers or managers by nicknames whose meanings are masked by virtue of their being in Shona. Aaron, age 44, a shop assistant in an Indian shop says that they call their manager *Mhepo* (wind)

³⁷ Although soon after Zimbabwe gained political independence in 1980, the then Prime minister Robert Mugabe, extended a hand of reconciliation to whites, after the compulsory acquisition of land by the ZANU PF government that saw most white commercial farmers losing their farms, racial antagonism and hate resurfaced. The tensions were exacerbated by intervention by some foreign governments through sanctions of various kinds and funding alternative ‘democratic’ political parties.

to denigrate him for his erratic mood. Workers at a clothes-making factory in Masasa address and refer to a white supervisor as *Murehwa* (after the praise-name of the Soko clan). Adam (the white supervisor) either walks or cycles to and from work and is popular for his “khaki trousers and farmer-shoes” making him symbolically a black man. Shona nicknames for whites can be used with relative safety, over and over, within or outside the earshot of the bearer, giving the user enormous pleasure. The observations made in this study are consistent with those made by de Klerk (1998) in her study of Xhosa speakers’ nicknames for white farmers in South Africa.

In some of his oral presentations at election campaigns for ZANU PF, President Mugabe has referred to the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai as *Tsvangison*, a slangish nickname that some ZANU PF supporters and sympathisers repeat in their casual degrading talk about Tsvangirai. Some members of the opposition political parties refer to President Mugabe as *Hitler* (after a former German Chancellor), to index their hostility against some of his “inflexible and intolerant” policies. This kind of nicknaming falls under what Holland (1990: 263) calls “public” or “official” nicknames.

Our data shows occasions where some young children in high-density suburbs shout insulting nicknames of unpopular older people passing by their neighbourhood, from the crowd or hiding places to avoid identification. Interviews with some of the children revealed that some of the victims of this disrespectful naming practice are unpopular teachers, police officers, members of some African independent churches and women. We will look at this naming system more elaborately in Chapter 8.

6.2.6 *Praising*

Earlier we noted that nicknames could be either self-ascribed or assigned by others. “Self-ascribed names typically identify some positive trait or characteristic of an individual” (Blount 1993: 35). In an earlier study on the Shona address system in general, (Mashiri 1999) we remarked that, “the self-selected nickname is always positive and has overtones of self-praising and bragging.”

We recorded children, young adults and adults’ self-ascribed nicknames and the meaning that they derive from their usage. Some children from wealthy families, which can afford digital satellite television, adopt names of cartoon characters such as *Spiderman* and *Superman*. Many of the children who watch the local television mostly, choose nicknames from the names of some prominent musicians like *Aleke “Borrowdale” Macheso*, *Simon “Chopa Cellular” Chimbetu* and *Leonard “Karikoga Musorowenyoka” Zhakata*. A child who names himself after a musician may alternate that name with the namesake’s nickname. For instance, a child may refer to himself as ‘*Macheso*’ in a naming-game situation, and ‘*Borrowdale*’ in a self-praise chant when imitating the musician’s dance style.

This naming style is consistent with naming practices in two Oceanic societies, Truk in the Caroline Islands and Lakalai on the north coast of New Britain as observed by Goodenough (1965). Goodenough notes that, “once established a nickname becomes part of what is handed on to the namesake, who receives all the names of the person he is named for” (270). Most of the children’s self-ascribed nicknames enable the bearer to celebrate his individuality and prowess, on the one hand, and represent a kind of wish-fulfilment in their owners, on the other hand.

While secondary school students tend to choose names of heroes/heroines from books, (e.g. *Macduff* in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Nyasha*, in Dangarembwa's *Nervous Conditions*), some university students name themselves after well-known theorists/scholars (e.g. *Chomsky*, *Hymes*, *Achebe*, *Okot p'Bitek*). The secondary school students use the naming practice to display their emotional attachment with certain points of view represented by the characters that they name themselves after. However, the university students seem to choose names that indicate their learned status or competence as well as legitimise their ideological or theoretical orientations.

We observed that older, particularly working class men, choose nicknames from what they perceive as prestigious occupational/professional titles. Some of the names that we recorded from casual conversations at beer drinking sessions when naming, including self-praise, seem to be rife among peers and friends. Some of the commonly occurring names were, *Captain* (after army rank), *doctor* (medical doctor), *member-in-charge* (after head of police station), *gweta* (lawyer), *gavhuna* (after the popularity of current governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Gideon Gono) and *professor* (academic rank). What is evident from the names both students and older people choose is that self-praise "nicknames may influence the bearer's own self-perception and act as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (de Klerk and Bosch 1997: 104). As Morgan, O'neil and Harre (1979: 7) put it, a person's name and the various appellations, which he acquires through life, may reflect the kind of person he takes himself to be.

It seems apparent from our data that self-praise nicknames are more common among men than women, and more so among children than adults. The reasons for the gender

variation in this naming practice do not appear to be immediately clear from our data. Let us attempt to offer two explanations. First, we tend to agree with Lakoff's (1975) claim, (although we do not share her feminist arguments), that there are universal differences in men and women's "choice and frequency of lexical items; in situations in which certain rules are performed..." (8). Second, if we take self-ascribed nicknaming as self-assertive and aggressive discourse, then its infrequency in females is explained by Mashiri's (2000a) assertion that Shona culture (both modern and traditional) generally socialise women to be self-effacing and unassertive. Self-praise nicknames are used mainly as reference terms. However, use of self-praising nicknames as address terms is an indication of the acceptance of the nickname by members of the bearer's social network.

More commonly, members of a social network assign praise nicknames to individuals with or without these individuals' knowledge. The nicknames are usually associated with a particular salient feature of the individual, physical or behavioural. There is a very low frequency of praise nicknames based on an individual's physical attributes. Those that we recorded are derived from the bearer's beauty, height and fitness. Martin, age 29, says that he addresses his 7 year-old daughter as *Miss Zimbabwe* since "she is tall, slim and cute". One bus rank marshal at Mbare Musika is well known by colleagues and acquaintances as *Jaindi* (giant). His tall and heavy frame frightens away pickpockets to the relief of bus operators and passengers. Some nicknames are semantically ambiguous. For example, one commuter conductor with a small built body is called *Kambeva* (a small mouse) by his workmates. When his small body works to his advantage (e.g. when the bus is full and he can comfortably tuck himself in a small corner), the nickname connotes an accolade, but when it works to his

disadvantage (e.g. when he fails to reach for the roof of the bus to put luggage), it indexes an abuse. In an interview, *Kambeva* notes that he can infer from the type of applause, the accompanying comments and non-verbal signals whether the name is being used to praise or to demean him.

Praise nicknames based on the individual's behaviour occur with very high frequency in our data. One old woman says that she addresses her 9 year-old grandson as *Mufundisi* (pastor) for his passion for reciting biblical memory verses at Sunday school; a grade 2 teacher at one private school addresses one girl in her class as *Calculator*, as praise for her arithmetical acumen and a students at one secondary school address a prominent soccer player for the school team as *Warrior* after scoring the winning goal in a provincial soccer competition in 2001. Anderson, age 35, the school coach talks of how the school shouts “*warrior, warrior!*” during a match and how the cheering prompts not only the player in question but the whole team to play their hearts out and win.

Students at the University of Zimbabwe give praise nicknames to students who display academic excellence, those who show bravery and militancy in fighting the riot police or local security guards and those who are popular in sport or other social activities. Some of the names we recorded are, *Professor* (for maintaining high scores in assignments), *Commander* (for bravery in leading an attack against the riot police in a demonstration), *Green bomber* (insulting nickname for local security but given to a student as a recognition for stoning security guards into submission during a demonstration), and *Mwaruwaru* (after popular national team soccer player Benjamin

Mwaruwaru). No praise nicknames for female students were recorded. One possible explanation is their general absence from student public activities.

We noted that some Christians or fellow parishioners give each other praise nicknames. For example, *Moses* (for an older man who is popular for his leadership ability), *Murevi* (priest, for a young male lay preacher who speaks eloquently), *Dorcus* (for a woman talented in crocheting and popular for community work), *Joseph* (for a young boy who acted very well in a Christmas play featuring the birth of Jesus) and *Paurosi* (for a prominent male evangelist). The use of these names as address terms is often limited to the church setting and by fellow parishioners. Deriving praise nicknames from prominent biblical personalities is a way of evoking solidarity among fellow parishioners. In this sub-culture too, nicknames for men are more common than for women, perhaps because the traditional Christian culture tend to subordinate women to such group roles as worshipping, singing and serving.

6.3 **Clan praise-names**

In addition to many other functions (Foggin 1936-7: 62-69, Pongweni 1996: 6-8), totems and the associated clan praise-names serve sociolinguistic functions among the Shona. The people use praise-names as address devices in interaction, with women using them within the family domain more than men and men in the public domain more than women.

In our data praise-names occur in mother-child interactions with enormous frequency, perhaps because in Shona society mothers play a central role as teachers and socialisers of children. Mothers can address babies by their clan praise-names when

lulling them. We observed Janet, age 28, singing a lullaby for her 9 months old baby³⁸:

7. Chinyarara mwanangu. Chinyararai
vaChihera, nyararai Shava!
(Be quiet my child. Please stop crying
VachiHera, stop crying, Shava!)

ChiHera is the praise-name for daughters of men of the eland totem and *Shava* is the general praise-name for all members of the clan. As if she understood her mother's plea, the baby stopped crying. Like song and poetry, chanted praise-names soothe a child and make her/him cooperate with her/his mother.

We also observed mothers using clan praise-names to applaud their children for achievements ranging from performing a service in the house (e.g. washing the dishes, washing a car, etc) to doing well at school and assisting parents with school fees for younger siblings. While fathers tend to address children using praise-names in such circumstances, occasionally and tight-fistedly, mothers do it more regularly and generously. At primary and secondary school prize-giving ceremonies and at college and university graduation ceremonies, some mothers shower their successful children with praise-names in loud eulogies. Interviews with some children revealed that the praises make them evoke a mixture of shyness and exhilaration.

³⁸ In Shona society, as in many other societies, children become discourse partners as early as a few weeks of birth. Parents and/or caregivers address them both as ratified addressees and as pseudo addressees (Schottman 1993, Obeng 1999). We do not consider children as passive participants in the process of language and cultural socialisation. Like Mead (1956) and Ochs (1986), for example, we see children and other novices, including infants, as actively organising sociocultural information that others convey through the form and content of their actions and socialise adults into modes of acting and communication deriving from their school and peer-group experiences.

Some women address their in-laws by their clan praise names to show respect and deference. They also address their husbands by their praise-names with varying frequency. In an interview many older women said that they do so more frequently when thanking their husbands for offering them gifts, especially “to give an example to my daughters” says one woman, to get their attention in public and negotiating in conflictual interactions. Young women address their husbands by praise-names less frequently, particularly in the presence of their in-laws and sometimes in moments of extreme excitement.

Discussions with some college girls show that many Shona girls do not want male strangers to know their totems nor do they want anyone to use or disclose their clan praise-names in public. We could not get plausible reasons for the girls’ objections, but considering the function of totems in Shona, knowing one’s totem or praise-name is knowing their history, their behavioural and moral features, including their family sexual behaviour. Besides, one’s totem is believed to symbolise one’s ‘real’ identity, hence one who knows a person’s totem may have power over that person. This assumption is consistent with the belief that witches can use a person’s totem to harm him/her.

In-laws tend to address their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law by clan praise names as alternates to teknonyms, to index respect as part of the proper ritual care expected in *chinyarikani*. Of particular interest is the question of which clan praise-names should a woman be addressed or referred to by? There appears to be no complete agreement among the different Shona dialects on this issue. We observed an occasion where an old Zezuru man thanked his daughter-in-law for buying him a pair of shoes by using

both her husband's praise name for daughters-in-law (*Gambiza* for the Moyo clan) and her own clan praise-name (*Duve*, for the Mbizi clan) in one and the same utterance. The man's explanation was that a woman is partially assimilated into her husband's family but she also retains her own clan identity. Among the Karanga, and to some extent the Korekore, a woman is only addressed by her own family praise-name (e.g. *VachiHera*, for woman of eland clan, *MaSivanda*, woman of Lion clan). We noticed that the Karanga tend to use both the Shona honorific *Va-* and the Ndebele/Zulu prefix *Ma-* (daughter of) (cf. Kumalo 1992: 351).

Adult male relatives, peers or friends may also address or refer to each other by clan praise-name in the public domain. Two male students at the University of Zimbabwe who share the same totem reciprocally exchange the name *Chirandu* (praise-name of the Heart totem) outside the class situation. One personnel manager says that an older employee at his company who shares the same totem with him addresses him as *Nyati* (Buffalo totem) when he comes into the manager's office to make a special request, and we observed male neighbours who normally call each other by title plus surname exchanging only clan praise-names in a marriage negotiation proceeding when children from the two families married.

The praise names in the students' interaction serve as a social bond between members of the same clan and an indirect reminder of the obligation that each has on the other. The older employee uses the praise-name to evoke in the manager a sense of cooperation and solidarity that is culturally expected of clansmen. This cooperation and solidarity of the clansmen and other socially commendable behaviour towards fellow clansmen are underscored through idiomatic expressions, especially proverbs

(Pongweni 1996: 12). But, of course, in the modern context the manipulation of language to achieve one's end may be perceived as blackmail. The neighbour's shift from title plus surname to praise-names in a marriage negotiation session marks the cultural significance of the newly found relationship and the sensitivity of the context and stresses mutual respect between the two families. Summons and vocatives performed in marriage negotiation proceedings are face-threatening acts of some sort. Therefore, both parties, but especially the son-in-law's representatives use specialised language including clan praise-names, to mitigate speech acts such as requests and complains.

6.4 Descriptive terms

6.4.1 *Title and Occupational name*

Occupational names play a very significant role, especially in service encounters where the speaker may be familiar with the addressee or referent but does not know his/her real name or the addressee's function or role is a more important determiner of identity than his/her name. The occupational name is preceded by the honorific title *Va-* (Mr) especially where the referent is older than the speaker. This type of name can be used either as address or summon terms. Examples are *Vabhiridha* (Builder), *Vamakanika* (Mechanic), *Vamukaka* (Milkman), *Vaconductor* (Bus Conductor), *Vadriver* (Driver), *Vamupurisa* (Police officer/Guard), *Vamugaisi* (Miller), *Vaice-cream* (Ice-cream man). When someone wants to seek the favour of a security guard, he/she addresses him/her as *Vamupurisa* (police officer). These epithets serve as what Milner (1961: 304) has called "verbal lubricants... soothing the vexation of wounded pride and imagined or genuine grievances."

It is quite clear from our data that most of the addressees who receive title plus occupational name (TON) are male and most of those who use this address form are female. That most of the recipients of TON are male is understood from the fact that traditionally, men dominated most the public or service occupations. Women tend to use this pattern of address more than men because Shona culture requires women to show politeness in speech exchanges with male strangers as a way of maintaining social distance with them. Communication in these relationships often involves what Philipsen (1992) calls “mere talk” occurring in “small talk” (Glenn, LeBaron and Mandellbaum 2003: 1).

According to Philipsen “mere talk is talk in and through which one ‘keeps his [her] distance’ or ‘stays at arms’ length’ from another” (74). This kind of talk is considered as talk governed by a set of conventions independent of those that have been forged by the two interlocutors. Small talk involves subtle forms of communication occurring naturally in a particular setting (e.g. doctor’s office, street corner, supermarket counter, etc) but are easily overlooked and “too often dismissed as unimportant (Fitch 2003: 92). The use of TON therefore signals the degree of politeness/deference (Brown and Levinson 1978: 77).

It seems that borrowed (both assimilated and unassimilated) respect occupational terms are preferred, even where Shona equivalencies are available. It appears that terms borrowed from English show a greater degree of formality than native terms just like speakers choose to swear or say taboos in English assuming that its less offensive than doing so in Shona.

6.4.2 *Occupational name only*

However sometimes speakers can just summon a person selling their wares on the street by calling out the name of the ware in place of the seller's name (e.g. *Mabhodhoro!* 'Hey you bottle-seller', *Mazai!* 'Hey you egg-seller', etc). By so doing the speaker focuses on the occupation of the addressee or the ware that the addressee is selling and maintain distance with the addressee.

When dealing with strangers in service encounters Shona speakers can address or refer to the service provider by their occupational name only. In this case the age of both the speaker and the addressee or referent is irrelevant. A parent visiting his/her child's school can address any teacher he/she meets as *ticha* (teacher), a patient admitted at a hospital can interact with medical personnel addressing or referring to them by titles, *doctor*, *nesi* (nurse), *sister* (nursing sister), etc. These can be used as generic vocatives. In other words, a patient lying in a hospital bed may call any medical staff member who happens to be nearby *nesi* or *sister*. Although this term does not single out one particular individual, it makes it clear to every hearer with that function that she/he is being addressed. In this case accuracy of occupational title or rank is not important. Since the patient is an outsider to the profession he/she may not be aware of the strict rank distinctions

There are certain occupations considered low in the estimate of the people, which are rarely used as terms of address. Pursuers of these occupations do not like to be addressed by their occupational titles or terms. They are either addressed instead by kinship terms (see Chapter 7), or by euphemistic terms (e.g. *matanyera*, 'toilet cleaner' addressed, *sekuru* 'uncle', *dhakabhoyi* 'mortar mixer,' referred to as *asistanzi*

‘builder’s assistant’). In our data there are occasions where certain speakers address or refer to strangers by their low occupation terms. Examples from our data are *hudhu* (security guard), *house technician* (house maid), *madhodhabhini* (garbage collector). These are metaphorical abuse terms that we discuss in fuller detail in Chapter 9. Here we shall only note that the use of such terms connotes the speaker’s “anger and aggressive feelings toward the addressee” (Gregersen 1997: 575).

6.4.3 *Kinship terms and physical descriptive phrases*

Besides service encounters, there are several occasions where people interact with strangers on specific limited business (such as asking directions, standing on a bus queue, etc.). Under such circumstances, though they are far from obligatory, kinship terms such as *baba* (sir), *ambuya*, (mum), or terms of respect such as *vakuru* (sir) (depending on the sex and age of the speaker and addressee) can be used. However, when summoning a stranger in public, Shona speakers may use a kinship term plus a descriptive phrase that isolates the addressee. At a queue at the passport office, a security guard shouts at one woman:

8. Imi amai mune dhirezi regreen
 pindai mukiyuu!
 (Hey you mum with a green
 dress, join the queue!)

At an employment agent, a receptionist calls out to a group of men standing outside,

9. Ndidaidzireiwo baba vane
 muparavara avo.
 (Please could you tell the man
 with a bold head to come in.)

In addition, an army officer maintaining order in one commuter train shouts in a crowded railway station,

10. Imi sisi vapfupi vane *jean*
 madonhedza chikwama chenyu
 ichi!
 (Hey you short lady in jeans
 you dropped your wallet!).

The use of descriptive addresses is an efficient means of identification. The use of kinship terms such as *amai*, *baba*, *sisi*, for example, makes the addresses polite. This tendency to give strangers polite addresses is found in many modern languages (Dickey 1996: 257-8). Hence we wish to pursue it in the next chapter where we show the social meanings deriving from the use of kinship terms in varied situations and relationships.

6.5 **Summary**

In this chapter, we have raised three crucial points. First, use of nicknames, clan praise-names and descriptive terms revealed interesting facts not only about language but also about the cultural values of Shona society. Second, it was clear that Shona speakers use a variety of innovative nicknames, yielding a rich repertoire of pragmatically significant address and reference vocabulary. Third, there are gender-based differences in the use of nicknames, occupational names and clan praise-names.

Our data revealed that the right to nickname others is not equally distributed. Children may coin nicknames for their parents in private, just as younger people may do the

same for older people, but they do not usually address them by these nicknames. There is formality in one's face but informality behind one's back (Mbaga and Whiteley 1961: 145).

From our data, it however appears that this rule could be suspended in some occasions. Younger people may address by nickname an older person whose behaviour reduces him/her to a lower social status making him/her amenable to ridicule. But, in compliance to the imposition-avoiding principle of deference-politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987), the younger people may inflect the older person's nickname by the honorific prefix *va-*. Second, it is possible for younger people to share joking relations with people of their grandparents' age. The joking relations may give them temporary emotional ties with the older people. When the old pastor and his wife are called '*Timmy naBonzo*,' social distance between them and the parishioners is suspended in favour of the rhetoric of camaraderie.

On the second point, it was clear from this chapter that nicknames and clan praise-names, especially, provide people in various relational cultures with a rich repertoire of vocabulary to convey pragmatically significant messages. While clan praise-names are essentially distance minimising terms, descriptive terms have a distance maximising function. On the other hand, nicknames do both depending on the relationship between the speakers and addressee or speaker and referent. With regards nicknames, distance maximising includes the social control and demeaning functions whereas distance minimising involves the affection, social solidarity and praising functions. The range and patterns of nicknames, descriptive terms and clan praise-names display Shona speakers' linguistic resourcefulness. The use of descriptive

addresses or terms, for example is a way of coping with namelessness in service and in incidental encounters.

On the gender-based difference, it was clear that generally nicknaming is a men's game. Frequencies of nicknaming between male friends, peers and colleagues were much higher than between women and no occasions of self-ascribed nicknames were found among women. A study more focused on gender difference in nicknaming would provide more informative insights to the results of the present study. However, we could hypothesise that women tend to shy away from nicknaming, except in romantic relations where it signals strong affection, because nicknaming tends to be associated with roughness, offensiveness and sometimes, public display. All these are generally regarded as unfeminine. We also hypothesised on the possible reasons for restricting occupational names to men and for lack of clan praise-names as address terms between female interlocutors.

This chapter has not dealt with slang nicknames and name-calling, interesting aspects of addressing and referencing that convey messages in regard to the relation of the self to others. We shall deal with these in Chapter 9 (nine). We have however, made reference to use of kinship terms with descriptive phrases in identifying strangers in public places and in place of occupational terms for people occupying low occupations. Chapter 7 will describe the pragmatic significance of kinship terms in non-kin interactions.

CHAPTER 7

EXTENDED KINSHIP TERMS³⁹

7.1 Introduction

The most common use of kinship terms is as addresses to relatives (henceforth the ‘literal’ use). Commenting on the use of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic, Farghal and Shakir (1994: 242) say, “Literally, kin terms are used to designate family [nuclear and extended] relations among relatives (e.g. father-daughter, mother-son, brother-sister, etc).” As such, they are largely unproblematic: *amai* as an address to the speaker’s biological mother is simply standard in Shona. Many relatives, such as sons and wives, can be addressed not only with kinship terms but also by name or with other words, but the question of which type of address is used when among relatives does not concern us in this chapter. This chapter concentrates on the non-literal use of kinship terms. An overview of the Shona kinship terms most often used in address and / or reference, and the relatives they nominally designate, is given in table 1.

In this chapter we adopted the term “extended” as a modifier for the phrase “kinship terms” from Dickey (2002: 119) and Mayer (1965: 7). “Extended kinship terms” says Dickey, “relate the addressee to the speaker like literal ones but are used to a person who does not stand to the speaker in the relationship indicated by the lexical meaning of the term” (119). Of course, sometimes a speaker who erroneously thinks he/she is

³⁹ The idea of ‘extended’ kinship is more complex than is presented here. In many African societies, Zimbabwe included, kinship can be divided into ‘real’ and ceremonial. Real kinship is extended to include “the departed and those yet to be born” (Mbiti 1989: 102), and ceremonial kinship includes non-human objects such as an animal or part of it, associated with totemic affiliation, in the traditional sense. In the modern society, ceremonial kinship also includes religious (Christian) role relationships. While these extended forms of kinship may be permanent and/or institutionalised, those discussed here are deliberate, spontaneous and largely momentary and sometimes negotiable.

related to the addressee or who is pretending to be related may use a kinship term, but in most cases the speaker of the extended kinship term does not intend to imply an actual genetic connection. On the other hand, as will be illustrated in our data, an addressee may contest or refuse the definition of a relationship suggested in a term that a speaker uses.

As our data will show, extended kinship terms are used with reference to people who are completely unrelated to the speaker but who share some characteristic of the relative whose kinship term they receive. Women addressed as *amai*, for example, are old (at least in comparison with the speaker) and are often being treated with affection and/or respect. Writing on address forms in Yoruba, Oyetade (1995) notes that, “persons with whom there is no definite relationship are also addressed as ‘father’ and ‘mother’ if they are approximately as old as one’s parents” (526). Our data reveals that extended kinship terms have now acquired daily usage among non-kin people, frequently among acquaintances and strangers, especially in service encounters. Market women freely use these terms to address one another and to address clients, and it is not unusual for commuters in the same vehicle to use any of the terms in table 1 for one another.

This extension of family relationships to society appears to be universal, but each culture defines its set of kinship terms and the roles they serve. To be called, ‘mother’ in one culture may hold a distinctly different set of expectations, than that of ‘mother’ in another culture (cf. Fitch’s 1991 description of the meanings of the word mother in Colombian Spanish). In Shona, it appears that kinship term usage is the meeting point between cultural constraints to interpersonal behaviour and individual creativity.

In both Shona traditional and Christian culture, one's behaviour towards others, especially elders and those of the opposite sex reflects his/her *unhu* (manners). Many institutions and social networks emerged in the city and have guaranteed the survival of traditional values. Our data shows that, the church, for example, provides a social network, which replaces a number of functions of the extended family that members left behind. Network members, therefore become "honorary" kin and are entitled to the rights and obligations extended to real kin.

Respect to others in speech and otherwise is a cultural imperative inculcated in children through the socialisation process (Jain 1969: 88, Krishnamurti 1992: 85). As illustrated in Chapter 6, kinship terms are important modes of respect among the Shona. Besides observing the appropriate use of kinship terms to non-kin in different interactive situations, children are also taught to address strangers using kinship terms. We observed how some mothers prompt their young children to acknowledge help or an offer from a stranger saying to the child, "*Iti mazvita sisi/mukoma/auntie*, etc" (Say thank you sister/brother/auntie, etc). In these situations, a mother rewarded a child (4-13 years) for volunteering an acknowledgement using a suitable kinship term, by verbal commendation, corrected wrong use and sometimes reprimanded for wrong use. For a Shona child, displaying the correct usage of kinship terms as respect strategies to strangers and acquaintances is evidence of that child's communicative or cultural competence.

However, speakers also use kinship terms creatively to index particular social meanings. A speaker's knowledge of a term's literal meaning and his/her

communicative intention help him/her to choose a suitable kinship address/reference term according to the addressee or referent's sex, relative age, and social status. The intended or desired social meaning of a kinship address term determines its social or communicative function since a Shona kinship term is a special culturally situated linguistic symbol that carries many meanings. Therefore, in order for us to appreciate the social function of Shona kinship terms, we ought to examine the varied social meanings deriving from usage. But, before we do that we shall briefly define what ordinary kinship entails, how anthropologists have perceived it, and what it involves among the Shona.

The description and analysis of kinship terminologies has traditionally assumed a central place in Western anthropological studies of kinship since Morgan's (1870) comparative cultural analysis. Kinship theory became a constant for anthropological research across functionalist, structuralist, symbolic, cognitive, Marxist, and other paradigms (Radcliffe-Brown 1941, Evans-Pritchard 1951, Levi-Strauss 1969). Kinship terms, according to Leach (1958) are "category words by means of which an individual is taught to recognize the significant groupings in the social structure into which he is born" (143). Leach's definition represents the dominant conceptualisation of kinship terms that limit their use to 'real' kinship relationships.

For more than a century, social and cultural anthropologists have pursued the concept of "ordinary" kinship most assiduously and most theoretically, under two main headings: consanguine relations, by blood (descent theory), and affine relations, by marriage (alliance theory). But, researchers dwell mostly on the link between kinship and biology.

Naively, kinship seems to entail the study of biological relationships. But, early anthropologists realised that kinship does not only involve biology but a socially constructed relationship as well. Anthropologists drew a distinction between *pater/mater* (social parents) and *genitor/genetrix* (biological parents). Later, the latter pair was also viewed as a social construction (of biological parentage) (Barnes 1961: 297).

Recognising biological parentage as a social construction implies that kinship is completely independent of biology. Needham (1960: 97) argues that “biology is one matter and descent is quite another, of a different order.” Similarly, Levi-Strauss states that, “a kinship system does not exist in the objective ties of descent or consanguinity between individuals: it exists only in human consciousness...” (Levi-Strauss 1963: 50). This total divorce between kinship and biology threatened to render kinship irrelevant, thus making it difficult to distinguish kinship relations from any other form of durable social relations (Holy 1969: 168).

This charge could possibly be avoided by defining kinship in terms of local ideas and understandings of the process and relational significance of procreation, pregnancy, nurturing, etc. In the analysis of kinship in Shona, we need to understand both the semantic structure of kinship and the sociological structure. According to Wilson (1973: 255):

In the semantic structure we are concerned with the meanings of words to the people who use them... [and] the sociological structure concerns the identification and status of

people toward each other, thereby
systematising the rights and duties of
individuals with respect to each other.

A description of the use of kinship terms as address resources provides insight into the users' understanding and interpretation of the terms, their pragmatic value and the interlocutors' relationships.

The Shona nouns *hama* and *ukama* may be glossed in English as kin, kinsman, relative and kinship or relatedness, respectively. Their primary reference is to people between whom there is a genealogical relationship. It is extended metaphorically to describe people related to each other in any way resembling a kinship relationship. Thus as will be clear from our data analysis, any two people who behave familiarly and intimately, such as friends or neighbours, may come to identify themselves to each other and outsiders as *hama*. They may address or refer to each other as *hama yangu* (my relative) or by some kinship terms discussed in this chapter. Similarly anyone who is brought into a relationship with another person in a manner analogous to a kinship relationship such as an adoptee (cf. Pongweni 1996: 10, on how, among the Shona, immigrants or slaves adopted the totem of their new rulers to cement their relationship with the latter), an “in-law” may be identified as *hama*. By contrast, a non-relative is a stranger, *mutorwa*, in Shona.

The terms *hama/ukama* describe a class of any and all kinsmen. Chimhundu's (1996: 188) Shona monolingual dictionary, *Duramazwi reChiShona*, defines *hama* as:

Hama yako munhu weropa rimwe chete newe,
kana kuti munhu anoera mutupo umwe chete
newe, kana kuti umwewo anobatanidzwa
newe pakuroorerana. Pachivanhu hama
dzomunhu hadziperi.

(Your relative is someone of the same blood
with you, or someone who share the same
totem as you, or one related to you by
marriage. In Shona traditional culture an
individual has countless relatives.)

The implication of this definition is that the term *hama* may be qualified by a number of terms each denoting a relative, genealogical distance of relationship: *Hama ruswa/ukamaruswa*, may be glossed as “very distant kin,” those with whom a relationship could only be established by tracing back through very distant ancestors; *hama yokuroorerana* may be “distant kin” or “close kin”; *hama yemumba/hama yeropa* may be glossed as “close kin.” Thus the term *hama* denotes a super-class of any and all kin, and when qualified makes only general distinctions. When the word is used it establishes a basic identity. A person who is *hama* is not *mutorwa*.

In social situations such a person can be trusted, can exercise certain claims to hospitality, or is obliged to offer the same. This reciprocal obligation to hospitality is embodied in the importance of sharing food as underlined in the proverbs, “*ukama igasva hunozadziswa nokudya*” (Relationship is a half-measure; it is filled by being given food) and “*Chawawana idya nehama mutorwa ane hanganwa*” (Whatever you have secured, eat with relatives; a stranger forgets) (Pongweni 1996: 12). The solidarity implied in these proverbs and other socially commendable behaviour towards fellow clansmen seems to determine people’s

choice of kinship terms in address behaviour and some of the social meanings they attach to the terms.

Ukama or kin may be further specified by a number of terms each denoting a class of kin. The terms set forth below, together with a description of a more closely related kinsman and an English gloss (cf. Wilson 1973: 257-8) are those that occur in our data functioning as terms of address among non-relatives:

Table 3: Kinship terms used as terms of address among non-relatives

Term	Gloss	Description
Hama	Relative	Same sex acquaintance or friend
Sekuru	Grandfather	Also uncle, older/younger than mother
Ambuya (synonym: gogo)	Grandmother	Also mother's brother's wife
Ambuya	Mother-in-law	Wife's mother or one married to wife's brother
tezvara/tsano	Father-/brother-in-law	When younger/older than one's wife.
mukuwasha/tsano	Son-/brother-in-law	Sister/daughter's husband
Vamwene	Mother-in-law	Husband's mother/sister
Muroora	Daughter-/sister-in-law	Son/brother's wife
Baba	Father	Older than speaker of same generation for respect of imply friendship
Babamukuru	Father's brother	When older than father. Also husband of wife's

		elder sister
Babamunini	Father's brother	When younger than father. Also, husband of wife's younger sister
Amai	Mother	
Amiguru	Mother's sister	When older than mother. Also wife of father's elder brother
Mainini	Mother's sister	When younger than mother. Also wife's younger sister or wife of father's younger brother
Mukoma	Brother/sister	When older than ego
munin'ina	Brother/sister	When younger than ego
Hanzvadzi	Brother/sister	Of opposite sex
Mwana	Child	Of same generation as speaker's own child
Muzukuru	Nephew/niece	Also grandchild
Mukadzi	Woman/wife	Small girls
Murume	Man/husband	Small boys
Muramu	Brother-/sister-in-law	Wife's sister, husband's brother
Tete	Aunt	Same generation as one's sister or aunt

Our analysis will show the occurrence of kinship terms borrowed from English, some of them used in their slang form⁴⁰. Virtually all the foreign forms are “core borrowings” (Azuma 1996). “Core borrowing forms are items for which the host language [Shona, in this case] always has viable equivalents and meet no lexical need” (Azuma, 3). Therefore, Shona speakers probably use such forms from English simply for pragmatic purposes.

Our interest here is not the use of kinship terms among “real” relatives in the prototypical sense. Typical of many urban centres in Africa, the notion of kinship described above has given way to metaphorical or functional ties. Commenting on kinship networks in Africa, Houseman (1995) says,

Kinship ties [in the cities] may be best appreciated not as the basis for the formation and maintenance of discrete groups, such as households, descent groups and family units, but as the components of a ramifying network of relationships.

This is a shift in outlook in which kinship links are envisaged less in terms of close primary ties and more as the building blocks of wider and more diffuse webs of relatedness.

Thus, in the city, kinship boundaries shift and relationships are extended and as Houseman notes, there are possibilities for “reordering existing patterns of

⁴⁰ The widespread use of slang forms of kinship terms borrowed from English shows the movement towards the delocalisation and deethnicisation of vocabulary in an urban multilingual society where, normally, urban dwellers need to master the use of more than one ‘language’ in order to operate effectively and confidently in various situations they encounter every day.

relationships (see Chapter 5) and introducing new ones” (81). Titiev noted this fluidity in the use of kinship terms in his study on Hopi. This study reveals that kinship terms have nothing to do with genealogical connections (Titiev 1967: 37). Thomas’s study of Australian kinship terms suggests that kinship terms do not necessarily always indicate ties of blood but might be used to express status or to refer to matters of obligation and privileges (1906, Chapter 12). The data analysed here confirms Titiev and Thomas’s observations. We shall therefore proceed to illustrate some occasions where Shona speakers use kinship terms as terms of address among non-kin, and particularly the pragmatic value of these terms as reflected in their social meanings.

When a speaker selects and uses a kin term of address metaphorically to encode social information in an interaction, that is, to maintain or enrich social interaction with an unrelated individual, the term acquires a social or indexical meaning. In this context, the social meaning of the kin term will only become clear if the speaker and the addressee have the same understanding of its literal meaning or if the context of use makes it abundantly clear (where the addressee may not know the literal meaning) what the speaker implies. Both the cultural knowledge that the addressee shares with the speaker and the context of talk enables the addressee to interpret the social meaning of the address term.

Although kinship terms can also be used as personal reference terms, the terms used in address may not be the same used in reference (Yassin, 1977: 128), this study is limited to those kinship terms interlocutors use in face-to-face interaction where situated experiences influence their choices. However, the results of this study may

provide a springboard for research that compares and contrasts social meanings that derive from the use of kinship terms in address and reference.

7.2 Social meanings of kinship terms

The kinship terms discussed here are only those that featured prominently in the transcribed talk and/or participant observations of the participants in this study. The kinship terms selected from the transcribed talk and from the participant observations for discussion in this chapter are those that featured no fewer than five times for any social meaning that they expressed.

7.2.1 *Age (zera)*

A speaker can choose any of the kinship terms listed above to express age difference between him/her and the individual with whom he/she speaks, acquainted or not. The speaker is the point of reference, in that he or she chooses to use any of these kinship terms with another individual by deciding whether the addressee is older or younger than him- or herself.

The present researcher boarded a bus from the University of Zimbabwe in October 2002. An older woman carrying a baby on her back entered the almost full bus and stood holding the roof rails for support. A young male student noticed her and offered her his seat saying, “*Uyai mugare apa amai.*” (You can come and sit here mother.). Out of gratitude, the woman volunteered to call the young man ‘*mwanangu*’ (my son), when she said, “*Wazvita zvako mwanangu*” (Thank you, my son.). In another case, one nursing sister at a General hospital dressed an elderly man’s swollen eye. When she finished she announced, “*Zvaita manje baba!*” (You can go now father!). In

gratitude, the patient responded, “*Inga waita zvako muzukuru.*” (Thanks very much grandchild.)

The participants in this study revealed that they normally make a quick assessment of their addressee, especially in brief or incidental encounters to arrive at the terms of address they could use. For example, Chengetai, age 36, said:

1. Unongoonawo pamasangana pachu kuti mupfana here, unogona kumuti munin’ina, kana ngatitii pamusika uchida kutenga *mafruits* unogona kuti anoita marii nhai sisi. Semiso mungada kunzi chii? Ndogona kungokutii mukoma, *sometimes* kana muri same age neni ndinogona kungokutii *blaz*.
(By looking at an individual you can judge quickly if he might be younger than you then you can call him younger brother, if you go to the market to buy some fruits you can address the female vendor saying how much do they [the fruits] cost sister. What would you like to be addressed as? I could call you older brother, if I take it that we are of the same age, I can call you brother.)

However, some married female participants said that when they feel that the kinship term that the speaker has chosen expresses the social meaning *age* correctly but that meaning conflicts with their marital status, they would quickly respond with *mukuwasha*, ‘son-in-law’ as a way of guiding the speaker to the social meaning of *respect* instead.

7.2.2 *Adulthood* (*kuyaruka*)

Adulthood is related to the social meaning *age*. However, the former is often determined by the addressee’s behaviour and marital status. The legal age of

adulthood in Zimbabwe is 18 years, but the participants revealed that if an individual does not behave as is expected of an adult or a married person they would still regard them as a child. Batsi, age 30, who works as a shop assistant with one bakery in the city said that,

2. Kana ukaona munhukadzi anoratidza
kuti ayaruka asi akapfeka mini
ndinongomuti sisi.
(If I see a female customer who looks
like an adult but wearing a mini-skirt, I
can choose to call her sister, since she
behaves girlish.)

Oliver, age 29, working as a bar attendant at one night club in the city says that he addresses all the women who patronize the club, some of them old enough to be his mother, as *sisi*, as “they do not appear to be mothers plus I do think that *havadi kunzi vanamai*.” (They do not appear to be mothers. Moreover, I don’t think they themselves would want to be called mothers.). In September 2001, we attended a wedding ceremony of a friend, which was conducted at one of the Pentecostal congregations in the suburbs. One of the church elders stood up to congratulate the new bride and groom. He said,

3. Ndinoda kuti makorokoto kwauri
mwanangu Fanuel newe Ezabel, *but*
imi mose [to the congregation] kubva
nhasi hapana achabvumirwa
kuvadaidza nemazita avo. Mava
kungoti baba namai chete. [Members
of the congregation acknowledged by
cheering.]
(I want to congratulate you my son and
daughter Fanuel and Ezabel, but from
this moment on, I do not expect any
one of you in this congregation to
address them with their first names.
You shall simply call them father and
mother.)

Both Oliver's and the church elders' comments and other participants as well show the weight of one's marital status in governing how they should be addressed. In Shona culture, perhaps as in many other African cultures, when a woman or man reaches adulthood there are certain expectations from society and responsibilities that come along with maturity. It appears that wearing a miniskirt and frequenting night clubs, if one is a woman, is not associated with adulthood, hence the individual is addressed with a term that would normally be meant for a child (Mashiri 2001a, Vambe and Mawadza 2001). Hence, commercial sex workers, in spite of age, are commonly metaphorically referred to as "*vanasisi* or *vanasisi vebasa*" (Tafadzwa, age 39) (sisters, or working sisters). It therefore appears that getting married is an accomplishment deserving acknowledgement that should be expressed through kinship terms of address that connote adulthood.

7.2.3 *Affection* (*kuda/kufarira/kurezva*)

Affection between non-kin involves friendliness or fond attachment. In Chapter 6, on the function of nicknames, we mentioned the use of kinship terms *baba* 'father' or *mudhara wedu* (*umdhala wethu*, in Ndebele), 'our dear old man/father' to refer to the late national hero, nationalist and vice-president of Zimbabwe, Joshua Nkomo, "to show great affection people had for him" (Ruth, age 58). In December 2001 our four-year old son gave his preschool teacher a Christmas present on the last day of school. On receiving the present the teacher knelt beside the boy and recited the following:

4. Mazvita, **baba vangu!**
Wazvita zvako **murume wangu.**
(Thank you my father!
You have done well, my husband.)

Julius, age 62, a church pastor with a Harare congregation said that when he addresses small girls who attend Sunday school at his church, he calls them either *mwanangu* (my child) or *muroora* (daughter-in-law). Mary, age 45, an English teacher at one high school said that when she expresses gratitude to students for running errands for her she often uses the term *mwanangu*. The possessive stem *-ngu* (mine) indexes motherly or fatherly warmth and love in the same way real mothers or fathers use when praising, thanking or encouraging their own children. Addressing little boys as *baba*, *murume wangu* (my husband) or *mukuwasha* (son-in-law), and little girls as *muroora*, symbolises a cultural belief that all little boys grow up to be fathers and sons-in-law, while little girls grow up to be mothers and daughters-in-law.

7.2.4 *Respect* (*rukudzo/nyadzi*)

The social meaning *respect* expresses one's "admiration for, honouring of, or deference toward another individual, the state of being esteemed or admired by another, or both (Winchatz, 2001: 358). Wenger (1983: 271) says that, "deference refers to treating others with the proper ritual care." Most of the participants stated that there are two types of respect: (1) *kunyara* (lit. to be ashamed of or to be shy), and (2) *kukudza* (to be respectful). The difference between the two is summarised by Tabeth, age 37, who said,

5. Pane *mustreet-kid* anochengeta mota munaFirst pedyo nepandinogadzirwa musoro. Anoti kana ndapaka mota ouya oti, 'ndinosara ndakachengeta mota **amaiguru**.' Ini ndinoti hakusi kukudza chaiko. Munhu anenge achinyengerera mari chete. Asi zvakaita vana vangu, mai vanondishandira vakuru zvokuti hazviiti kuti vanzi **sisi** saka vanongovakudza muchiti **gogo**.

(There is one street child who volunteers to watch over cars at a parking bay in First Street very close to the hair saloon I go to. When I leave my car he comes over and says, 'I will be watching the car auntie.' I do not think his respect is genuine at all. He will simply be patronising me to give him a tip. On the other hand, I have a maid who is elderly. My children respectfully call her grandmother instead of sister.)

These two forms of respect are neither mutually exclusive, nor easy to distinguish. In fact, *nyadzi* (bashfulness) is a component of *rukudzo* (respect), since a person who displays respect towards another is more likely to be bashful also, yet one who is bashful may not necessarily be respectful. However, both attributes constitute important Shona “rules of pragmatic competence” (Lakoff 1973: 296) or “ethical/moral constraints” (Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom 2002: 225).

Interpreted in context of the Tabeth’s analogue, the respect that the street-child car-watcher expresses would roughly fall under type (1) while that expressed by Tabeth’s children to the maid falls under type (2) above. The social meaning *respect* in (2) is often expressed to or exchanged between individuals who know each other, yet that in (1) is expressed to or exchanged between strangers. These two forms of respect can be categorised as ‘relationship’ (category 2) and ‘encounters’ (category 1) (Gutek 1995: 7). A ‘relationship’ may occur when individual X has repeated contact with a particular individual Y in a social or business interaction. The individuals may get to know each other and build trust over time as that between real kin, as they develop a shared history.

Josephine, age 43, a secretary at an insurance company said that she addresses an elderly colleague as *ambuya* (grandmother) because she has “benefited from her grandmotherly advice for many years” and they support each other in personal matters. We observed that when working with a group of Methodist students in 2001 as a spiritual advisor they often addressed the researcher as *baba* connoting respect for his advisory role. We also observed that the terms *sekuru*⁴¹ (paternal/maternal uncle/grandfather) has come to possess, among other uses, a specialised use, viz. to address low-status older employees (e.g. messenger, gardener, driver, cleaner, guard, caretaker, waiter). In all the instances mentioned here, the speaker who uses the term *sekuru* is younger than the addressee.

The participants in this study also stated cases where an individual may be older but is obliged to address a younger person using a kin term of respect in recognition of the latter’s higher social status or what his or her role symbolises. Examples include, Dorcas, age 48, a nursing sister/midwife at a general hospital who is addressed by maternity patients as *ambuya* (grandmother) because of her midwifery role; Alice, age 39, a lodger who addresses her much younger landlord and his wife as *baba* and *amai*, respectively, for their parental role of giving Alice shelter and Moses, age 50, who says members of the church he goes to address their young single female pastor as *amai*, to index her shepherding role. In all the three cases and similar ones, the social meaning *respect* is created through ‘impersonalisation’ (Wood 1991: 147).

Impersonalisation in this sense means that the terms of address the maternity patients, Alice and Moses and his church-mates use to refer to their addressees identify these

⁴¹ Although *sekuru* marks respect, when Shona speakers use it for addressing or referring to a diviner/traditional medical practitioner they stress respect for the ceremonial role the addressee plays by adding a honorific affix *va-/a-*, to make it *Vasekuru /asekuru* (Sir).

addressees not as individuals, but as members of categories of midwives, house owners and pastors respectively. Hence, it is possible that the terms may not mark genuine respect, but mere patronage.

Contrary to ‘relationships’ described above, an encounter typically consists of a single interaction between individuals (Gutek 1995: 8). Typical examples are service encounters such as those cited in our discussion of occupational terms in Chapter 6. This brings us to the social meaning *politeness*, which, in Shona would have the same translation as respect.

7.2.5 *Politeness* (*rukudzo/nyadzi/kuzvirereka*)

In the previous chapter we noted instances where speakers use kinship terms plus descriptive addresses to summon strangers. This, we said, indicates politeness. Being polite is showing good manners toward another person, being courteous, or considerate (see Penman 1990, Wood and Kroger 1991, Holtgraves 2001, Mashiri 2003a). Participants in this study stated that when a speaker uses a kinship term normally meant for a superior relative, to address another individual, the social meaning of *politeness* might be a component of what is being expressed between the interlocutors.

Many participants stated this general use: “*Ndinenge ndichitaura nemunhu mukuru wandisingazivi* (Amos, age 28) (I would be addressing an older stranger.). This rule dovetails with Goffman’s (1967) comment on ‘face’ when he says that, “The person in our urban secular world is allotted a kind of sacredness that is displayed and confirmed by symbolic acts” (46). These symbolic acts are achieved, often

unconsciously, through the manipulation of communicative devices. Commenting on the use of Japanese honorific forms, Wenger (1983: 267) says,

The nature of respect, which is conveyed by honorifics is not easy to characterise. While honorifics are primarily a public symbol of respect, they do not necessarily indicate a 'real attitude' of respect.

We observed that there are many occasions where a woman attempting to get a ride in a passing vehicle may pip through the driver's window at a traffic light and shout, "*Muri kusvikawo kupi mukuwasha?*" (How far are you going son-in-law?) or a vendor at a flea market might encourage a female stranger to buy his ware, saying, "*Tine masun-glasses-ka aya ambuya!*" (Would you like these sunglasses mother-in law?). The use of kinship address terms in this manner is meant to "manage face" (Holtgraves 2001: 342), that is, the speaker is constrained by cultural rules of demeanor to avoid any language behaviour that may embarrass either the addressee or the speaker him- or herself, or both or which might suggest any desire to diminish horizontal distance.

There are cases where the addressee may misinterpret the social meaning of the address term used by the speaker. In this case the addressee may contest the address term usage immediately. Chenai, age 31, a shop assistant in one of the low-density suburbs narrated an incident where she greeted an older male customer saying, "*masikati sekuru.*" (Good afternoon grandfather.), to which the man responded,

- (6) Handisi sekuru vako ini. Unonditi
sekuru kuti ndachembera here? Sekuru

vari kumusha, muno mutaundi hamuna sekuru!

(I am not your grandfather. Do I look that old for you to call me your grandfather? Grandfathers live in the rural areas, not here in town.)

7.2.6 **Friendship** (*ushamwari/usahwira*)

The term **friendship** was chosen to subsume the state of same-sex companionship and the state of being playmates or buddies. Some of the participants interpreted friendship this way: Roger, age 19, a college student said,

- (7) Shamwari munhu wezera rangu, wandakakura naye tikadzidza tese. Ndingangoti mu~~face~~ wangu wepadyo. (I would say that a person I call a friend is an age-mate, someone I grew up with and went to the same school. He is really a close acquaintance.)

Chengetai, age 22, a university student said,

- (8) Ini munhu wandinoti shamwari munhu ari pedyo neni, sahwira chaiye. Ndiye munhu wandinoudza masecrets iye achindiudzawo ake. Tinofarira zvimwe chete. (A friend is someone very close to me, a real companion. She is the person I confide in and she in me. We have mutual interests.)

Most participants interpreted the social meaning *friendship*⁴² and *closeness* to refer to the same thing. The common elements of *friendship* revealed by these statements are representative of what most participants in this study expressed, that “friendship is characterised by the ideals of equality, mutual obligation, mutual knowledge and openness” (Dillard, Wilson, Tusing and Kinney 1997: 305). This means that friends typically share similar status and backgrounds (Hays 1988, Allan 1989 and Rawlins 1992), depend on each other in times of need (Hays 1988, Rawlins 1992), share common history and knowledge and display their ‘real’ selves to each other.

Interviews and participant observation showed that while older male friends exchanged the kinship term *baba* or *bambo* (father) more than younger friends, both categories exchanged the term *sekuru* (maternal uncle). Older men who became friends through marrying women who were friends or relatives sometimes became close friends themselves, spontaneously allocated each other ‘fictive’ younger and older brotherly positions, thus addressing each other as *babamukuru* (older brother) and *babamudiki* (younger brother), respectively. The English kinship term *aunt* (*tete*) featured quite prominently amongst both young adult and older female friends. However, only married women friends exchanged the term *amai*. The kinship terms that the friends exchange in all the cases cited here display affection and respect at the same time or affectionate and respectful reciprocity (Gaines, Jr. 1997: 360). Male friends’ use of the term *sekuru* and female friends’ use of the English address form *aunt* to express the social meaning *friendship* makes sense since in ‘real’ Shona kinship relationships, one shares a joking relationship with one’s maternal uncle or

⁴² In Shona ‘friendship’ includes both *shamwari* and *sahwira* (Chimhundu 1996: 416 & 423). The discourse of friendship captured on the section on ‘Nicknames’ in Chapter 6, use of slang in Chapter 8 and insults, in Chapter 9, treat *shamwari* and *sahwira* as variant forms whose social meanings depend on the context of use. The ritual element of friendship Chimhundu captures in his definition of *sahwira* seems to be more historical than synchronic.

aunt. Many participants in friendships where they use these kinship terms, both male and female, claimed that the closeness in these relationships often entails, among other things, sharing personal and secretive knowledge and information.

7.2.7 *Intimacy (Kunzwana)*

The social meaning of *intimacy* was not as salient as other social meanings in the participants' talk and use of kinship terms in non-kin relations. Reference to intimacy was made only a total of six times. This could be because some people count intimacy as rather similar to closeness or friendship. However, it was clear from the interviews and observation that the key participants in this study understood intimacy to refer to a very close relationship, including characteristics such as affection. Tendai, age 29, is very affectionate to his boss, thus he addresses her as *mama* "mother," in informal interactions; the boys at a college in Harare address one janitor as 'uncle James', to connote their intimacy with him and some sixth form students at one school call their Shona teacher *sekuru*, in informal interactions.

There are also a few cases where we observed Christian young men jokingly addressing their lovers as *ma-sisters* (sisters) and the lovers in turn addressing them as *ma-brothers* (brothers). This playful and idiosyncratic use of language by lovers to index intimacy, also discussed under nicknaming, is not unique to Shona or Christian discourse. First, some young men or women also refer to their lovers as *hanzvadzi dzorudzo* (male/female lovers) although the data surveyed for this study did not show any instances where interlocutors use such an expression in direct address. Second, Altman and Taylor (1973) suggest that personal relationships are unique entities created by specific individuals within a specific historical context. Shared meanings and expectations arise within such relationships and these meanings and norms are

unique. A number of scholars (e.g. Baxter and Wilmot, 1985; Bell, Buerkel-Rothfuss, and Gore, 1987) carried out empirical studies to show that this is a cultural universal in romantic relationships and friendships. We noted in Chapter 6 that “Relational culture” was the term coined to describe the unique symbolic meanings, and patterns of interaction that emerge within close relationships, often bearing little resemblance to public language rules (Fitch 1998: 142).

7.2.8 *Solidarity (Umwe)*

While the social meanings of *friendship* and *intimacy* are based on mutual penetration of individuals’ psychological worlds, a feeling of solidarity “can exist when an interest outside of the self is held common to more than one individual. It is a feeling of unity or commonality between people that can be based on group membership” (Winchitz 2001: 358). For example, solidarity can be grounded on a group, organisation, club, and so forth. According to the Shona participants in this study, a speaker and hearer exchange kinship terms that express equality, as well as mutual respect. Willard, age 26, said that among youth members of the church that he goes to boys and young adults address one another using the honorific title *mukoma* (brother), or *mukoma*, followed by their first or surname (e.g. *Mukoma/Mukoma Willard/Mukoma Majoni*) regardless of the age of either the speaker or addressee and girls reciprocally address each other as *sisi* (sister), or *sisi*, followed by their first or surname (e.g. *Sisi/Sisi Maria/Sisi Guchu*).

In the preceding Chapter, we discussed members of Johane Masowe weChishanu’s use of restricted terms in their networks. We noted that all male members of this church (including children) address one another and are also addressed by all female

folks as *madzibaba* (lit. fathers) or *madzibaba* followed by their surname. Similarly, all female members (including children) address each other and are addressed by their male counterparts as *madzimai* (lit. mothers) or *madzimai* followed by their surname. James explained that young members may address each other or may be addressed by adults using the title, *madzibaba* or *madzimai*, followed by their first names (e.g. *Madzibaba* Peter or *Madzimai* Esther). It is important to note that the use of the plural prefix *madzi-* (class 6) violates the prototypical rules of grammar. Its use is, however determined more by pragmatic rules than by grammatical rules. Thus, the use of *madzi-* can serve to indicate a greater degree of respect than is implied by the more common use of the singular form (Head 1978: 165).

The kin terms *mukoma*, *sisi*, *madzibaba* and *madzimai* create a personalised identity, that is, they function as identity markers. Besides, the respectful reciprocity that the terms express, they connote a levelling effect and a sense of one big family bound together by the same faith. The naming or addressing system, especially that used by the members of the African Independent group cited above, defines in-group from out-group members, a key element of solidarity. The use of sibling kin terms is not unique to Shona. This is similar to the use of *sister* in feminist discourse and the use of *brother* among unrelated black folks in the United States of America “ to express a deep bond of belonging with others of the same ideology or ethnic origin” (Larkey, Hecht and Martin 1993: 308).

We observed that some male young adults address a stranger of the same generation using the slang terms *blaz* ‘brother’ for a male and *sisi* or *sistez* (sister) for a female. It is common to hear someone calling out to a stranger on the street,

- (9a) Inguvai nhai **blaz**?
(What time is it brother?)
or
(b) Muri bho here **sistez**?
(How are you doing sister?)

Mashiri (2003a) reveals that commuter omnibus conductors and touts use these terms very often when addressing same generation passengers that they meet for the first time or seem familiar. There is an element of assumed generational solidarity, however not as strong as that assumed among members of organised groups as the examples of church members cited above indicate. One way of distinguishing addresses in the social meaning of the addresses exchanged among members in organised groups and among strangers is to refer to the later as familiarity rather than solidarity. This distinction would be in line with Brown and Gilman (1989) and Wood (1991) who suggested that the solidarity dimension might need to be split into two dimensions, “distance (or familiarity) and affect (or liking)” (Wood 1991: 151).

7.2.9 **Knowing the other** (*kuziva/kusaziva*)

This social meaning, according to the participants in this study refers to how well or not well one knows the other person or for how long or how well the person is acquainted with another. Many of the participants stated that they would use kinship terms to vocatively address strangers to attract their attention on the street, for example. Peter, age 19, said that if he wanted to ask for time from a woman he would say something like,

- (10) Pamusoroi **ambuya**, dzingaitewo
nguvai?
(Excuse me mum [mother-in-law],
what time is it?).

Commenting on the use of kinship terms in Jordanian Arabic, Farghal and Shakir (1994) says, “The best way to get the attention of a stranger on the street is to use a honorific kin term” (242).

Shelton, age 57, said that he addresses Jonathan, age 35, as *munin'ina* (young brother) since Jonathan and Shelton's young brother have been best friends since they were children and visit each other's home so often that to Shelton, Jonathan is almost his brother.

7.2.10 *Associative relationship* (*ukamaruswa*)

This is a relationship where an individual assumes some remote kinship with another that is associated with some common characteristic, experience or link with some third person. Many participants in this study talked of remote kinships based on similarity of totem with the other individual or a member of his or her family. Jane, age 39, a high school teacher said that she addresses one male colleague as *sekuru* since he has the same totem as Jane's mother. Abel, age 44, said that he addresses his neighbour as *mukoma* since they share the same totem. A woman who is my sister's best friend addresses me as *bhudhi* (brother). Although individuals who share these associative relationships hardly know much about each other or each other's families, certain rights and obligations may end up being given to them. Some functions that are normally fulfilled by true relatives may wholly or partly be taken over by these “relatives”.

7.2.11 *Spiritual relationship* (*ukama hwemusvondo*)

This is a pseudo-kinship commonly found among Christian societies. (Parkin (1997: 124) says that, “this is a ritualised kinship that has to be created deliberately through ritual.” The participants in this study identified the social meaning of spiritual relationship as connoting God-parenthood. James, age 16, said that he addresses one member of the church he goes to as *amai*, her children as *sisi*, *mukoma* or *munin’ina* since the woman helped on his baptism and mentors him spiritually as well. James said that he even addresses this woman’s husband, who is not a church member, as *baba*. Tandi, age 29, said that she addresses one woman member of her church as *amai* since she mentored her and assisted her confirmation into full membership of the women’s fellowship. People in these relationships are under mutual obligations of generalised reciprocity. They give each other gifts, give mutual, manual and moral support at festival times or when misfortune strikes and sometimes lend each other money.

7.2.12 *Status* (*chinzvimbo*)

The participants in this study used the term status to represent expressions of social meaning that refer to the position, level, or rank of one individual in comparison to another. “Whether a speaker views the other individual with whom he or she is speaking as inferior, equal or superior to him- or herself” (Winchartz 2001: 359) can be expressed through kinship term use. In one wage increase negotiation meeting between an employer and low scale employees at one organization, an older male employee stood up during discussion time and addressed the much younger employer:

- (11) Imi ndimi **baba vedu**, hapana zvatingaiteba. Kana tanzwa nzara tinochemawo kwamuri sewana wenyu. (You are our father and we depend entirely on you. When we become desperate we plead with you to help us out.)

Charles, age 35, a church minister said that members of his congregation address and refer to his wife as *amai* (mother), he as *baba* (father) and he addresses the adult members as *vanababa* (fathers) or *vanaamai* (mothers) in return, respectively. However, Charles addresses his Bishop as *baba* and receives either *baba* as well or *mwanangu* from him. We noted that while terms such as *amai* and *baba* could be used as both terms of address and reference, others, such as *vanababa* and *vanamai*, could be used only as address terms. When *amai* and *baba* are used in a religious context, they signify the roles the minister and his wife are expected to play – a relative formal and authoritarian one. Charles’s analogue shows three levels of social status within the same organisation. From Charles’s example and observations of other participants in this study, it appears that status and power sometimes merge into one another. Yet, they are still different social meanings.

7.2.13 **Power** (*ukuru*)

According to Oyetade (1995: 515-6), following Brown and Gilman’s (1960) model:

Power refers to authority or superiority of one person over another. It is therefore non-reciprocal, in that two people may not have power over each other (in the same direction). A power relationship obtains, for instance, in communication involving a boss and a subordinate member of staff... In such circumstances, according to Brown and

Gilman, the person that wields power over the other uses T(u), and receives the deferential V(ous) from the addressee, who is supposed to have no power.

In Charles's example, it appears that his Bishop has both authority and power over him whereas Charles has authority over members of his congregation but may not have real power over them. While the Bishop can address his ministers under him using the kinship term *mwanangu*, the ministers cannot return the same address to him. Moreover, he has real power over his ministers. Except in this case, the dimension of power does not quite apply to Shona as it is conceptualised by Brown and Gilman.

Brown and Gilman's concept of asymmetrical address arising from power differentials subordinates age to status. This means that if the person in authority is younger than the subordinate, the former will address the latter using his/her first name while the latter address returns with a title of respect or surname. Charles's observation above shows that although he has "power" over members of his congregation, they reciprocally exchange kinship terms of respect. The analogue given here shows that the concept of power or status derives its meaning from particular cultural settings. Brown and Gilman's notion is based on Western culture, while the data presented in this study reflects the norms of an African culture.

7.2.14 **Distance** (*chinyarikani*)

The term **distance** (*distanz*) was more prominent in the talk of women participants when describing the social meanings available for kinship terms. The terms that are often used to express distance are the in-laws relational address terms:

mukuwasha/mukwambo/tsano (son/brother-in-law), *ambuya* (mother-in-law), *muroora* (daughter-in-law), *tezvara* (father-in law). According to most participants, distance implies a lack of spatial proximity of one type or another, which can represent a lack of emotional or relational proximity between interlocutors. This makes sense since in Shona culture in-laws have an avoidance relationship, both linguistic and behavioural.

Lucy, age 29, who works as a petrol attendant at a filling station explained that when she noticed that one regular client was attracted to her and wanted to be too friendly with her she started addressing him as *mukuwasha* and keeping their conversation brief and official as a way of not allowing him to come too close to her. Some male participants said that they use the term *ambuya* to address women adults in business interactions to maintain distance between them. Interlocutors also use these terms in both formal and informal service encounters. Vendors at the market freely use these terms to address their clients or one another and commuters in the same vehicles use any of these terms as well for one another (cf. Mashiri 2003a).

7.2.15 **Patronage** (*kupara matadza*)

Although most participants in this study did not use the word patronise, it was clear from their explanations and the emotions they displayed that the forms of language behaviour they described involve the social meaning of **patronage**⁴³. Hummert and Ryan (2001: 258) define patronage as “modification of talk that is based on stereotypes of incompetence and dependence.” Some common characteristics of patronising speech are “feigned deference” (McGee and Barker (1982) (e.g. using words that sound polite while winking a third person), “disrespectful speech” (Ryan,

⁴³ Patronage talk is often accompanied by non-verbal features which co-occur with them, for instance, winking a third person, patting the addressee and gazing contemptuously. Any given message perceived as negative may contain one or more of these features.

Hummert and Boich 1995: 152), sometimes indicating impatience, and exaggerated praise.

Farai, age 31, explained an incident that occurred with her driving instructor when she was taking her driving lessons. She said that the instructor commented,

- (12) **Ambuya** munodhiraivha kunge
murume chaiye kwete zvinoita vamwe
vakadzi. Vanoita kunge vari
kunanidza purema yemwana nokutya.
(Lady you drive like man. You are
different from some woman learners
who drive a car as if they are pushing a
pram with a child inside, through fear.)

Farai said that she contained her anger by remaining silent since she needed the licence really quickly, but she had found his comments demeaning. We observed an incident in a computer orientation course where one older man had difficulties with grasping the instructions the younger instructor gave in English. Hence, he would always raise his hand to ask for help. When his hand was up the instructor would say,

- (13) E-e, **tsano** isai zvenyu ruoko rwenyu
pasi, ndinoziva dambudziko renyu.
Ndichasvikako!
(There is no need to raise your hand
Sir. I am aware of your problem and I
will come over!)

The instructor spoke slowly and placed great stress on the kinship term *tsano* to connote his impatience with the slow learner. The older man eventually dropped from the course.

Moreblessings, age 38, explained an incident where she stood in a bus line holding her purse in hand when one young man standing behind her commented, “*Muchabirwa ambuya!*” (Be careful lady. You are risking losing that money to thieves.). Moreblessings said that she was annoyed by the man’s comments, hence she replied,

- (14) Munoti handizivi zvandiri here
mukuwasha. Asi ndimi mbavha yacho
 kani?
 (Excuse me Sir. I know what I am
 doing. I hope you are not announcing
 your intentions to steal from me.)

This response is not only effective in establishing the independence of the patronised person, but it also attacks the “face” of the patroniser by calling attention to his failings as a communicator, just as the patronising attacked the ‘face’ of the recipient (Hummert and Ryan 2001: 260).

Tracy, age 43, a nurse at a general hospital for more than 14 years and now working at a nursing home in the city says that patronising talk is commonly used with older patients when talking them into taking their medication. She says endearment terms such as *muroora* (daughter-in-law), *vamwene* (mother-in-law) and other non-kin terms such as *vasikana* (girls) and *zimhandara* (A young healthy girl) are used for women, while terms such as *sekuru* (grandfather/uncle), *chikomba changu* (sweet-heart) (often winking another nurse) and *mukuwasha* (son-in-law), are used for men. Tracy said that such communication strategies usually “get the job done.” These patronising strategies may also be referred to as “sweet-talking” (Edwards 1979: 85).

Edwards describes the “sweet-talking” used in Guyanese speech for transactional and verbal duelling. In the Guyanese case, as in ours, sweet-talking involves flattery and persuasion with an intention to gain a favour.

7.3 Summary

In this chapter we illustrated four things. First, we argued that urban Shona speakers manipulate vocabulary normally used between kinsmen for interactive purposes among non-kin interlocutors. The choice of a kinship term is constrained by Shona rules of respect, the addressee’s sex, relative age, and social status and the speaker’s creativity and the intended illocutionary effect of the address act. Second, the range of social meanings indexed by the kinship terms reveal that the more parsimonious two- or three-dimension models of scholars such as Brown and Gilman (1960), Brown (1965), Friedrich (1972), Danziger (1976), and others, based on European languages cannot adequately account for the important distinctions and communicative complexities expressed through kinship terms in Shona.

The basic principle of Brown and Gilman’s model is that all social meanings in every language can be mapped somewhere onto the vertical axis of power or the horizontal axis of solidarity. But, there are as many as 14 social meanings of the Shona kinship terms that can be subsumed under these axes. For example, such social meanings as *power*, *status* and *respect* could be mapped under the power axis, and the *associative relationship*, *spiritual relationship*, and *solidarity*, among others, could be mapped onto the solidarity axis.

In short, it is clear that the two-dimension model tends to lump together some social meanings that Shona speakers perceive as distinct and separately meaningful. Many researchers of address systems adopt Brown and Gilman's model because of its simplicity (e.g. Hudson 1996). Brown (1965) hailed this simplicity, thus, "we need some scheme for classifying relations more narrowly, a scheme that will help us see regularities and to understand them" (73). However, our data have shown that probably the model's inadequacy is a consequence of this simplicity.

The third point is that the present study, like many other similar ones, has revealed that there are as many relational features that could be perceived as universal as there are particular ones. However, kinship terms tend to widen the boundary between those features that are akin to Western societies and those that apply to African societies, since these societies seem to conceptualise the notion of kinship differently. Of the social meanings discovered for Shona, the social meanings of *age*, *adulthood*, *respect*, *knowing the other*, *associative relationship*, *spiritual relationship*, for example, would apply more to the African than Western context, while *intimacy*, *solidarity*, *power*, *status*, *politeness*, *friendship*, *patronage*, *affection*, would apply to both societies. However, the realisation and interpretation of each feature would still vary culturally.

The fourth point emanating from our data is that the use of extended kinship terms among the Shona is somewhat restricted. Kinship terms are less often used in an extended sense than those for older people, perhaps because there are so many other terms for addressing young people. The other explanation could be that there are lesser reasons for avoiding a child's name if it is known. We also observed that terms for spouses are never used in an extended sense, except for children, perhaps because

of the restrictive nature of the relationship between an adult Shona woman, married or not, with male strangers. This probably explains the high frequency of occurrence in the data of the kinship terms *ambuya* and *mukuwasha*.

CHAPTER 8

SLANG

8.1 Introduction

Although it is clear from the preceding chapter that extended kinship terms index a number of social meanings, their use evolves from what is perceived as culturally accepted behaviour. Unlike slang, kinship term usage seems to be society-wide. One can safely claim that there is no person to whom a kinship term cannot be applied. Even if a person is not well known, a way of calculating his/her relationship with others (e.g. through the person's already recognised social relation to some known person) is immediately found.

Shona contains a rich array of slang words and phrases that are used as address or reference terms “by a rather large portion of the general Harare public but which are not accepted as formal usage by the majority” (Mawadza 2000: 93). Extensive definitions of slang, mainly from a (socio) linguistic perspective (e.g. Mawadza 2000, Eble 1996, de Klerk 1995, Crystal 1987, Flexner and Wentworth 1975) have been provided. Flexner and Wentworth (1975) define slang as “vivid, forceful and [more] expressive than standard usage. It often avoids the sentimentality and formality older words often assume” (vii). According to Eble (1996: 11) “slang is an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use so as to establish group identity and solidarity.” The aspect of the speaker's intention captured in Eble's definition, central to this chapter, is clearly enunciated by The American Heritage Dictionary, which defines slang as, “a style of language rather than a level of formality... the

distinguishing feature... is the intention – however often unsuccessful – to produce rhetorical effect, such as incongruity, irreverence or exaggeration (1996: xlvii).

In terms of form, our data shows that slang refers to non-standard language composed of new words or old words that take new meaning and metaphors. As Mawadza succinctly puts it, “slang refers to non-standard terms or non-standard usage of standard terms” (93). As our data analysis will show, the innovation implied in Mawadza’s statement is not motivated by linguistic constraints, but by sociolinguistic ones. Kirk-Greene (1966: 7) makes this point clearer when he says, “language draws its life-force from usage; and usage, in its turn, derives its impetus from living idiom and vocabulary.”

Slang has been widely referred to as ‘colloquial,’⁴⁴ (Eble 1996: 11, Potter 1950: 131) ‘sloppy’ language (Anderson and Trudgill (1990: 71), and has been characterised as ‘taboo, vulgar and derogatory,’ (Risch 1987: 353-4, Kirk-Greene 1966: 11). Many scholars also define slang in terms of its function: it encodes shared experience and “solidarity and identification with a group” (Ryan 1979: 147), and offers speakers the opportunity “of playing with, mutilating, recasting and misapplying words for the pleasure of novelty” (Kirk-Greene (1966: 9). Potter (1950) makes an elaborate account of both the speaker’s intention in using slang and its function:

Why should people not be content to ‘call a spade a spade’? Their motives for using slang can seldom be analysed convincingly, but in general they seek three things in various

⁴⁴ In the context of African American (Vernacular) English (Makoni, Smitherman, Ball and Spears 2003: 6), slang has been misunderstood as a sub-standard language associated with the lower class, as evidence of poor vocabulary and critical ability (Foerster and Steadman 1941) and a “rejection of the life-styles, social patterns, and thinking in general of the Euro-American sensibility” (Major 1971: 10).

degrees and proportions: novelty, vivacity, and intimacy. Slang proceeds from a new way of looking at things and it exercises every form of intellectual wit and verbal ingenuity. Slang is picturesque, livens up a dull theme, and administers salutary jolts or shocks to listeners.

While our data shows most of the elements that various authors cited here highlight, our concern in this chapter, as in all others, is to describe the particular use to which slang is put in particular situations and the various meanings implied.

8.1.1 **Who uses slang?**

Chimhundu's (1983) and Mashava's (1999) coinages 'town Shona' and 'township language' respectively, imply the preponderance of slang in the city. Although our study is based in Harare, it is rather difficult to verify the supposition in Chimhundu's term. Chinhundu, like Eble (1996), de Klerk (1995), Labov (1992) and Kirk-Greene (1966) establish that the youth are the prime users of slang. Labov says, "slang terms are the feature of youth culture through which identity within a subculture is advertised, if not also guaranteed" (345).

The element of gender has also featured prominently in discussion on who uses slang. Many writers on slang report males as slang users, females as slang eschewers (Bailey 1985). Basing her observations on the South African white community, de Klerk (1992) suggests that, "higher levels of slang usage by males may well be attributable to the fact that the use of slang often implies a high level of confidence, which is typically male attribute in Western society" (279). De Klerk further attributes men's use of slang to their large peer groups that are more hierarchical and more competitive

than female groups (Romaine 1984), which are smaller, more intimate, and do not value “verbal posturing” as much. Jespersen (1922), Milward (1937) and more recently, Flexner and Wentworth (1975) support this view. Notably, Flexner says, “most American slang is created and used by males... the majority of entries in this dictionary could be labelled ‘primarily masculine use’” (xii).

However, more recent research has offered counterevidence to this claim. Staley (1978) found unexpected similarity in usage of expletives by male and female students. Mashiri (2000a) observed some Shona working-class women’s use of abuse remarks for men on the streets of Harare and Risch (1987) reports a surprisingly high number of “dirty” or derogatory words middle-class women use to refer to men.

The results of the present study reveal four things. First, although most slang terms are taken from a pool of general slang vocabulary, individual cohorts or social network groups (e.g. vendors) have their unique vocabulary. It is true, though, that there are more slang labels for women than for men (at least as revealed by the usages observed and obtained from interviews) and naturally, men use these terms for address or reference more frequently than the women themselves. Second, it appears true also that young people (teenagers and young adults) use slang terms of address and reference most, although adults use a lot of slang, but of course, there is a difference between individuals as well as groups, depending on sex, social class and type of work (cf. Mashiri’s 2000a comments on construction workers).

In fact, generally, the young people are not a homogenous group. Observations and interviews established that use of slang terms of address and reference and the urban

neighbourhood and street tradition are intricately connected. The concept of neighbourhood⁴⁵, '*mumaraini*' (in the lines) or '*areaz*' (around the area), in Shona slang, provides insight into the function and style of language speakers adopt.

In Harare the street culture seems to be gendered. A 'street' or street corner is, therefore, considered primarily man's rather than woman's territory. Men spend more time in the street and on street corners and have more access to more of it than women do. It is the lower working-class male youths who frequently patronise neighbourhood streets and shopping centres in the high density areas as members of different cohort, and in the Central Business District guarding and manning parking bays, selling one thing or the other, or soliciting, who use slang with the highest frequency. Some of the slang address or reference terms that emerge from these and other streets experiences are what the sociologist Elijah Anderson (1999: 21) recognised as "The code of the street" and Lewis (1947: 48) as "group-language". Lewis notes how the creation of a 'group-language' within the framework of the broader society is a common phenomenon: "Whenever men are organised into groups for the purposes of specific action, they tend to develop a language foreign in some measure to the language of the larger society in which they move."

⁴⁵Commending on the significance of place and personae in Teamsterville speaking Philipsen (1992: 32) defines neighbourhood in terms of "both the physical setting (around here) and the particular people who make up [one's] network of friends, associates, and acquaintances (everybody) within it." The most important part of the physical neighbourhood is 'the street,' which as physical location refers to all outdoor areas in the neighbourhood, but particularly to streets, corners, sidewalks, porches and the road-side markets.

Third, lower working-class women also have their social networks where they create and use their own slang terms or the common slang vocabulary for their own purposes, although comparatively, fewer women know or use slang since the street tradition seems to be largely a male domain. The lower class females may be members of male street cohorts (in which case they may use the same language as their male counterparts in the group), commuter omnibus conductors, commercial sex workers, or vendors exposed to the 'street' cultural norms, values, aesthetics and experiences often use slang address and reference terms.

Through interviews, we learnt that middle-class and lower class Christian women seldom use slang terms of address. The common explanation that we got was "*Hazvina unhu kushandisa **slang***" (It is not morally right to use slang). Thus, women who use slang are labelled loose, devious, and disgraceful. The difference in the behaviour of lower class Christian and non-Christian women and middle-class is consistent with Coates and Cameron's (1988: 23) observation that "women are not a homogenous group, they do not always and everywhere behave in similar ways and their behaviour cannot be explained in global, undifferentiated terms."

Fourth, students (secondary school, college and university, in particular) use slang with friends and acquaintances. But, as our data will show, student slang is less creative and opaque than that of the street "artists". Preliminary results of a separate study that we are carrying out on the general use of slang by students at the University of Zimbabwe reveals that college students' language behaviour, including slang usage, tends to be influenced by their most consuming interest and their immediate circle of friends, what is novel to them or current in vogue, what they wish to keep

fairly secret from those outside their peer-group. Among the areas identified as having the greatest concentration of slang words are the opposite sex and students of a different social class and ethnic group. Similarly, investigations for the present study show the concentration of student slang terms of address or referents in these two areas as well.

It is important to note that some terms are more slangy or vulgar than others. In this chapter we discuss less vulgar terms and the heavy ones are discussed in Chapter nine (9) on Insults. The differences between light, medium and heavy abuse terms are given in the next chapter where this distinction is readily relevant.

8.2 Typology of slang addresses

We shall develop a typology that attempts to exhaustively describe the functions that slang address and reference terms serve in interaction. Five functions evolve from the data surveyed for this study: kinship terms, status terms, friendship terms, gender-related terms and surreptitious terms.

8.2.1 Kinship terms

Contrary to conventional kinship terms discussed in the previous chapter, use of slang kinship vocabulary is rather restricted in at least three ways. First, unlike the ordinary kinship terms, slang usage is not universal. We have already highlighted the groups of users of slang (at least according to our data) in the introduction. The non-universality of slang address and reference term use brings us to the second point that there are some people to whom slang terms cannot be applied at all or at least in direct address

(Merlan 1989: 229). For example, we did not find any cases of a child calling his/her father, *makeyi* (old man) or his/her mother, *muchembiza* (old woman). Usage of these terms is limited to reference. Third, unlike the ordinary kin vocabulary, slang alternatives, like some nicknames, can derive their social meanings from phonological and morphological manipulations.

Children can refer to their parents with slang terms when talking to their siblings, friends or peers and sometimes same generation relatives and neighbours. Our data reveals that women tend to use the lighter terms, *mudhara* (old man), for father and *mhomz* (mum), for mother. Sophie, age 22, talks to her boyfriend on the bus saying of her father,

1. *Mudhara* wangu anopenga asi
 havarovi. *Mhomz* havatauri asi
 vanorova zvisingaiti.
 (My father is very strict but he does
 not beat us up. My mother does not say
 much but she beats us thoroughly.)

Generally when women use slang terms to refer to their parents they signify closeness and respect, clothed in wit.

Although *mudhara* and *mhomz* also occur in male speech, the more picaresque terms *makeyi* (old man), *ngezha* (family provider), *mbune* (the man in charge), for father, and *muchembiza*, for mother, have a higher occurrence. Adults use *makeyi* more frequently than teenagers. Hence, it now hovers on the outskirts of the general slang repertoire. However, when it is used, *makeyi*, which literally means ‘last year,’ is

derogatory. It signifies a father's conservatism and backwardness. In an interview, Joshua, age 50, emotionally retorts

2. Kana vana vadiki vachititi makeyi
vanoreva kuti isu hatizivi zvinhu
zvamazuva ano, takapusa.
(When young people call us *makeyi*
they mean that we are primitive and
stupid.)

The term *ngezha*, also used to refer to unfamiliar wealthy men, appeared mostly in University of Zimbabwe male students' utterances. A student refers to his father as *ngezha* to index his dependence on him and the father's role to provide financial support. Both students and working-class teenagers use *mbune* to imply father. In many instances where the term is used it signifies a higher degree of social distance between the speaker and the referent and contempt for a father's authority.

Teenagers' resentment to fathers' authority suggested in the use of the slang terms *makeyi* and *mbune* could be explained by Freud's theories of father-son relationship⁴⁶. A father may become so over possessive of his (first-born) son that he focuses only on his own ambitions being fulfilled through him. He may push the son into some profession or personality mould, often showering comments like "when I was your age..." At times it might appear to the father that his dreams are being shelved, he may get desperate thus disapproving of everything the son does. There is a constant comparison with his situations at that age. This constant picking on the child could cause antagonism between father and son or could lead to a strained father-son

⁴⁶ Freud believed that there is a competition between a son and a father. His theory is that a father is afraid of being replaced by the son. But, we tend to agree with Chowdhry (2000) that it may not be the issue of the competition between a father and a son that causes this resentment. Rather, it could be the way and extent a father exercises control over a son.

relationship. Beside, use of slang terms to refer to a father, the strained relations could also lead to a son's creation and use of nicknames to referring to his father.

Contrary to the slang terms for a father, the term *muchembiza*, derived from *muchembere* (old woman) signifies a high degree of social closeness between a son and a mother (the referent). Although no child could address his mother directly as *muchembiza* since this would be tantamount to gross violation of rules of respect, an older son can affectionately call his mother *muchembere* as an alternative of the unmarked form *amai* (mother). When asking after her health he could say “*Makadiniko muchembere?*” (How are you [dear] mother?), rather than “*Makadiniko amai?*” (How are you mother). Perhaps because of the [potential] tension between a father and a son hypothesised above, we did not find any occasion where the term *mudhara* could be used in any comparable way.

The term *dikez* from *babamudiki* (little father) occurs only in male speech, both as an address and reference term. It occurs most in greetings (e.g. *Hesi dikez* (Hello ‘little father’)). A speaker may use it as an address term to call his father's younger brother who is younger than him or same generation as him. Interviews revealed that one can only use such an address form in the absence of one's father who may interpret use of the slang word as contempt of his younger brother's kinship status and role. This is so, because in Shona culture a person is expected to regard his/her father's brother, younger or older, as his/her father's alternate and treat him (including addressing) with respect despite his age. But, being away from the cultural censorship agents (older people), one can address a ‘little father’ by slang to signal solidarity.

We also observed occasions where some women from both the working class and middle class address their fiancé or husband's teenager brother as *dikez* "in a spirit of play" (Bell and Healey 1992: 313). By crossing the age and linguistic boundary through use of words that are assumed to constitute the addressee's repertoire the women show desire to increase intimacy with the little brother-in-law (to be), who naturally feel ashamed and constrained towards his older brother's fiancé or wife. This brings us to a set of slang terms that one uses to address relatives one shares a joking relationship with.

Culturally a person shares a joking relationship with one's *sekuru* (grandfather/uncle), *muramu* (sister/brother-in-law), *ambuya* (/grandmother/aunt) and *muzukuru* (nephew, niece or grandchild). A joking relationship⁴⁷ involves

A relation between two persons in which one [or both] is by custom permitted, and in some instances required to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn is required to take no offence (Radcliffe-Brown 1971: 101).

In Shona, the joking relationship is largely reciprocal (symmetrical). It becomes partially reciprocal, that is "A teases B as much as he pleases and B teases A only a little" when A is older than B. In practice, the extent of joking also depends on the

⁴⁷ Such social relationships are extremely widespread, especially in Africa, Asia, Oceania and North America. Joking relationships are of two types: the symmetrical, where each of the two persons involved teases and makes fun of the other and asymmetrical, where "A jokes at the expense of B and B accepts the teasing good humouredly but without retaliating; or A teases B as much as he pleases and B in turn teases A only a little" (Radcliffe-Brown 1971: 101.). There are many varieties in the form of this relationship in different societies.

participants' marital status and personality. Therefore, although there is supposed to be pretence of hostility and a real friendliness between participants, to someone (because of their marital status or personality), jocular speech (or non-verbal behaviour such as horse-play) may arouse serious hostility.

Use of slang terms of address between participants in a joking relationship is one outstanding feature of the relationship. An uncle may address or refer to his nephew or niece as *muzukulez*, while he is called *sekulez* or *kule/kulez*, the uncle's wife may call her husband's nephew and niece as *muzulez* as well, and they address her as *gogaz* (from *gogo* 'grandmother'). We noted earlier that a woman could address her husband's younger brother or her younger sister's fiancé or husband as *dikez* (brother-in-law). The brother-in-law can return that address by calling his sister-in-law *gulez* (from *amaiguru* 'sister-in-law').

The joking relationship allows speech play reflected in the conscious manipulation of phonological elements of the address terms. Like nicknames, Shona slang offers greater latitude "for experimentation and playfulness with language" (de Klerk 1998: 4). As is clear from the words *muzuhulez*, *sekulez/kule*, *gogaz*, *dikez*, and *gulez*, some slang terms have syntactically atypical endings and often ignore the phonological rule system of Shona. These words end in a consonant (as in English) yet Shona normally has open syllables, that is, it has "a CV syllable structure, which is the simplest and most primitive" (Pongweni 1990: 32). Pragmatically, in addition to playfulness, the phonological manipulation exercised by participants in a joking relationship creates and maintains "positive face" that requires the achievement of closeness and intimacy.

We noted in Chapter 7, that some male teenage and adult friends use the kinship term *sekuru* (uncle/grandfather) to connote friendship and solidarity. The same categories of speakers also use the slang version of this term, *kule/kulez*. The choice of the slang form makes the ordinary kinship term unmarked. This means that the level of closeness or camaraderie implied by the slang term is higher.

We dealt with the use of kinship terms to address or refer to non-kin persons in detail in the previous chapter. But, with regards the use of slang, only slang forms of borrowed terms for denoting siblings are used. The terms *blaz/mablazo/blasen* (younger/older) ‘brother’, *sistera/sisdom* (younger/older) ‘sister’ and *kazi* (cousin) feature most in our data. There are very few occasions where women used the first two terms and no occasion where women speakers used *kazi* to address a male or female stranger.

Sibling terms are used in summons, for example,

3. *Sisdom!* Ndiri kureva imi sisi mune
dhirezi *rered*.
(Sister! I am talking to you sister in red
dress.)

They are used in requests, e.g.

4. Tengai *perfume* yakachipa iyi *blasen*.
Tengerai *maigulez* vangu ava.
(My brother I am offering you this
perfume at a cheap price. Buy one for
this sister-in law of mine.)

Speakers also use sibling terms in making orders,

5. Zvawaona siyana nazvo *kazi*, unofira mahara.
(Mind your own business cousin, your kindness will prove costly for you.)

They are used in expressing gratitude,

6. *Thanks blazo.*
(Thanks my brother.)

as well as in greetings,

7. Hesi *mablazo*. Ndiri pano mupfana wenyu. Ndinoiona mota.
(Hello my brother. I will be here your younger brother watching over the car.)

The example of a summon cited above is a recoding of an utterance made by a passport officer to a teenage girl standing in a queue at the passport office where the researcher eavesdropped as part of the participant observation exercise for this study. It appears that the speaker used the term *sisdom* to achieve politeness, but used the descriptive phrase ‘...*mune dhirezi rered*’ for identification. Obviously if the addressee was an older woman, this sort of address would have sounded offensive. The combination of the kinship term and the descriptive phrase shows that the addressee is ‘unknown or nameless’ (Dickey 2002: 247).

We recorded the request cited above at a flea market in the city. A young man selling perfumes at the market encourages a man old enough to be his older brother in the company of a woman who appeared as his fiancé, to buy some perfume. The seller's use of the kinship term *blasen* rather than the conventional word *mukoma* or its English equivalence, *brother*, makes the request more manipulative. The term prompts the addressee to display youthful agility in public by buying the perfume. It also places a sense of cooperation normally expected from a kinsfolk, that is, to support a kin's business (cf. Mawomo's 2001 study on the language of negotiation and bargaining by sellers in some Harare flea markets).

The order cited above was recorded at Machipisa shopping centre from an utterance by a pickpocket to a passer-by who had alerted a stranger in a bus queue of an attempted theft on her by the speaker. The kinship term *kazi* (cousin) in this context implies an ethnic bonding, possibly deriving from a common history of African impoverishment that breed lawlessness. The use of this term is therefore marked in that it connotes anger resulting from perceived betrayal by a 'relative.'

The use of the term *mablazo* cited in the last example is not uncommon on the parking bays in the city. Mashiri (2004) describes similar instances of language use by street boys who man parking bays in the city. The results of the current study are consistent with Mashiri's conclusion that street boys use language to patronise car owners. The term *mablazo* on such occasions implies two social meanings. First the slang form of the term signifies sibling intimacy. The intimacy legitimises the speaker's offer to guard the addressee's car in as much as it obliges the latter to give the former a token of gratitude. To stress the obligation, the speaker places himself at a lower position

relative to that of the addressee in the social status hierarchy through the use of an exaggerated honorific *mablazo*, for the addressee and a “depreciatory” (Chao 1956: 219) possessive form *mupfana wenyu*, ‘your younger brother) for himself.

8.2.2 *Status terms*

We observed that working-class males in service encounters such as street teenagers who operate as parking bay marshals and vendors, security guards, commuter omnibus crew, semi-skilled workers in industry and students use slang status terms in address most frequently. Some women who work in these male environments tend to adopt male speech but exercise some restraint in face-to-face interaction. Thus, they tend to resort to talking behind the referent’s back.

The terms with the highest occurrence are *mudhara/dhara* (old man), *ngezha* (a wealthy person), *mhene* (a wealthy person), *murungu/muvheti/ngezi* (a white man), *bigaz/big dhara* (big old man), *vakorinde* (the fat ones), *vagaratiya* (the well to do) and *bozwell/bozanga* (boy is well). While the rest are known by all the categories of users mentioned above and the general public, terms such as *bozwell/bozanga*, seem to be known and used by street vendors and parking bay marshals only. This is not to suggest that these speakers constitute a monolithic relational culture throughout the city. In fact, we noted that there are some pockets of the city where these terms are not known or reach much later than others.

Among the terms known by the general public, *vakorinde* and *vagaratiya*⁴⁸, are the newest. They originated from commuter omnibus touts. The term *vakorinde* connotes smartness, invincibility and shrewdness. Anyone who is cunning enough to get wealthy while everyone else is struggling is labelled as *vakorinde*, two affluent prisoners at the Harare remind prison who had all their meals brought from home were referred to by fellow inmates as *vakorinde*. When a popular politician and businessman got arrested for contempt of court we heard some vendors commend,

8. Vaifunga kuti havabatweka nokuti
vakorinde!
(He thought he was immune to
prosecution since he is famous!)

When Mrs. Chisamba, in her popular Shona television social talk show violated taboos by prompting discussion of sex-related issues, touts and vendors showered accolades at her calling her *mukorinde*.

A cliché was developed among touts and anyone who proved supreme in any activity would be commended as

9. Uri *mukorinde* saMai Chisamba.
(You are as indomitable as Mrs.
Chisamba.)

⁴⁸ It appears that the process of popularising the terms *vakorinde* and *vagaratiya* involved associating the words, graphically, but not necessarily semantically with Shona translations for the New Testament books *VaKorinde* 'Corinthians' and *VaGiratiya* 'Galatians'. Widely shared knowledge of these books increases the appeal for and novelty of these terms. But, the use of these terms as slang has implications for 'semantic deterioration' or pejoration (Mashiri, Mawomo and Tom 2002: 229).

The term *vagaratiya* has narrower application and is often used to refer to anyone who appears well to do; touts who eat chicken and chips for lunch, girls who have boyfriends who drive them to and from work are labelled *vagaratiya* by their friends, lecturers who do not unite with their colleagues on a work boycott at the University of Zimbabwe are referred to by these colleagues as *vagaratiya*.

The term *vakorinde* is derived from the verb *-kora*, meaning, ‘be fat’ and *vagaratiya*, from the verb *-gara*, (sit) implying, *kugarika*, ‘to be affluent’. Here fatness has several social meanings, which are all positive. This implies that the physical state of fatness is viewed positively. This conception is consistent with the traditional African conception of beauty where people, especially men, “admire large but not so large female forms and seem to deride model forms that are derived from White stereotypes of beauty and perfection” (Mashiri 2000a: 60). McFadden (1992: 172) makes the same point from another angle: “Size has always been a factor and numerous African novels applaud the contours and sensuality of a large, well-formed African female form.” With regards men, potbellies and fat necks are often associated with affluence.

While *vakorinde* and *vagaratiya* are applicable both to men and women, the terms *mudhara*, *bigaz* and *big dhara* refer to men only. Traditionally, *mudhara* (an old man) is wise, ingenious and dependable and fends for his family. In Shona slang, the concept performs the same function because “a motorist patron looks after the boys who take care of [or cleans] his car by giving them tips and is, therefore, in the same category as the head of the family who fends for his family” (Mawadza 2000: 96). Speakers use these terms in address in place of the addressee’s unknown name.

A shift from *mudhara* to *bigaz* or *big dhara* has a superlative implication. The later are more flattery and, as Tasara, age 16, a tout, claims,

10. Zvakangofanana nokuti *shefu* saka
munhu anobva anzwa kukudzwa
chaiko.
(It means the same thing as calling
someone *shefu*, therefore one feels
highly respected.)

Although *shefu* may have the same meaning as *bigaz* or *big dhara*, the former is used less frequently since it carries an air of seriousness and formality. The latter involve wit and playfulness and as Lederer (1997: 5) says “allow [speakers] to break the ice and shift into a more casual and friendly gear.”

In some contexts interlocutors use *mudhara* as a reference term with the semantic feature [+power]. As we mentioned in the section on kinship terms, reference to *mudhara* in talk among siblings implies their father. We observed that, for workers at a company, *mudhara* means the boss, for teachers at a school, it refers to the headmaster, for political supporters it means their member of parliament or their party leader, etc. Besides indexing power, subordinates seem to use this term to imply high regard, affection and respect for the referent. Shared knowledge of the institutional social structure makes the referent of the term *mudhara* unambiguous in each case. As Fitch (1998: 14) suggests, “The terms for talk themselves form part of a communal code that endows ways of speaking with symbolic meaning.”

The words *murungu/muvheti/ngezi* (lit: a white person) or their plural forms *varungu/mavheti/mangezi* (white people) are used both as address and reference terms for either women or men. These terms are used interchangeably. Commuter omnibus crew softens their requests or orders to passengers by using these terms. One often hears touts shouting:

11. Frairai mota yengu *varungu*.
 Zvamatouya kudai zvatonaka *mavheti*.
One asara apo!
 (Get on your bus happily white people.
 We are happy to see you whites. One
 more person there!)

Mawadza (2000: 95) explains:

Passengers on a commuter bus are often referred to as *varungu*, because they are regarded as employers. This stems from the fact that white people were, for the most part, the employers in the colonial period. Thus, without *varungu* on the commuter bus, they would be no business.

We observed that some bus passengers refer to themselves as *varungu* as they demand respect and politeness from the often-rowdy touts:

12. Munofanira kutibata zvakanaka nokuti
 tisu *varungu* venyu. Tikasakwira mota
 dzenyu idzodzo munodya chii?
 (You must treat us well because we are
 your employers. If we shun your buses
 how do you survive?)

Many other working-class people both male and female, but especially male, use the terms *varungu/mavheti/mangezi* to address clients or customers in service encounters. At markets, vendors and other sellers address [potential] buyers as *varungu*. People also call their real [black] employers, especially in the informal sector, *varungu*. However, because these terms sometimes sound ironic or sarcastic, people tend to avoid calling real employers using slang terms. But they still use them in reference. For example, domestic workers call their employers *varungu/mavheti* when gossiping about them.

Our study confirms Mashiri's (2003a) and Mawadza's (2000) observations that vendors, touts, and some low-income service providers or gatekeepers use the terms *varungu/mavheti/mangezi* as negotiation or patronising tools. This means that they use the terms to flatter a client into buying their ware or giving them a favour or a big tip for a service rendered. A waiter at a restaurant in the city who engaged the researcher and his friend into some small talk said:

13. Chakadii chikafu vakuru? Ndimi mava *varungu* vedu saka tinoita zvido zvenyu kunyanya. Kana pasina imi tinofa nenzara. Kukudza wokwako ndochaizvo kwete zvataita *mangezi* zviya pasina chaanokupa futi.
(Are you enjoying the food Sir? You are our own white bosses therefore we are committed to fulfil your wishes. We cannot survive without your patronage. In any case, we should respect our own, unlike the way we used to treat whites yet they hardly gave any respectable tips.)

The waiter uses the term “*kukudza wokwako*” (respecting your own people) and he denigrates whites, to evoke ethnic solidarity. This rhetorical style induces the addressees to empathise with the speaker and offer a large tip.

Of all the terms that people use *mhene* (a steenbock) is highly metaphorical and very popular with women. Teenage women, and commercial sex workers use this term most frequently to refer to wealthy boyfriends or clients. Lucy, age 25, a commercial sex worker in the Avenues says,

14. *Mhene* murume ane mari uye
anobhadhara pakuru.
(A steenbock refers to a rich man who
pays well.)

However, some men also often refer to single professional women who drive expensive cars as *mhene*. A steenbock has an attractive structure, looks healthy from the abundant grass it eats in the plain where it inhabits. The tall grass makes it hard for the hunters to find the steenbock. Hence a hunter who catches it counts himself lucky. The slang term *mhene* therefore, evokes an image of a wealthy and generous, though hard to come by man or woman. Speakers often use the word only as a reference term since it portrays rich men as prey and rich single women as lose.

We observed two teenagers selling phone juice cards on a parking bay. When a woman driving a big expensive car pulled into the car park a third boy attempted to jump onto the bay when one of the card sellers yelled:

15. Siya *bozanga* rangu mupfana!
(Move away from my wealth client
young man!)

At a flea market in the city two women selling musical cassettes are reviewing the previous day's sales. Reminiscing about their best sale by one rich foreign client, one of the women says,

16. Riya riya *ibozwell* chairo.
(That man is very wealthy.)

It appears that although the term originally refers to men only (boy-is-well), in practice it is used to refer to either men or women.

Unlike the other terms discussed earlier, we did not find instances where speakers use *bozwell/bozanga* as a term of address. This implies that the term is meant to be a “restricted code” (Bernstein 1972, de Klerk 1995: 168) that speakers use to either identify potential business or celebrate their fortune. The implicit nature of the code demands extensive mutual understanding between the interlocutors.

8.2.3 *Friendship terms*

In Chapter 7, the term ‘friendship’ covered the state of same-sex companionship, the state of being playmates or buddies. The use of the slang terms discussed here and the social meanings that they insinuate call for a broader conceptualisation of friendship. Therefore, here we broaden the concept friendship to include acquaintanceship,

friendship (both same-sex and opposite sex) and love relationship after Bradac (1983). It appears that different types of relationships yield different trajectories⁴⁹ (Berger and Roloff 1982), provide different rewards and entail different obligations (Suttles 1970). Underlying these particular defining attributes is the more general notion of expectations or role requirements; individuals expect different outcomes for self and other from different types of relationships.

The slang terms of address that interlocutors use for each other can show the type of friendship. The terms *mudhara*, *kule* and *chikwata*, are used by male close friends and working and social acquaintances only. A young man may address a same-generation stranger as *mudhara* as a way of evoking a spirit of friendship in a potentially conflict situation or to seek peaceful resolve to a conflict. A man rammed into the back of the researcher's vehicle at a parking bay in the city. He approached the researcher saying

17. Very sorry *mudhara*. Ngatitauriranei.
Zvinhu zvinongoitika mumwe wangu.
(Very sorry buddy. Lets talk.
Accidents happen my friend.)

⁴⁹ With regard to relational trajectories, three prototypes can be described: (1) intensity of affect and interaction can increase linearly to infinity, (2) intensity can assume pyramidal or higher order forms and (3) intensity can remain at a level which is stable throughout the course of the relationship. The linearly increasing trajectories are those of the close friends, the pyramidal trajectories are those of the lover and the stable trajectories is that of the acquaintance (Bradac 1983: 142).

Acquaintances are of two types: servicing acquaintances (e.g. doctors, teachers, petrol attendants, etc), work acquaintances and social acquaintances. Service acquaintances and work acquaintances are non-voluntary and social acquaintances are to an extent voluntarily maintained. Because (1) and (2) are not stable, it is possible for a close friendship (involving the opposite sex) to evolve into a love relationship and some people can be friends and lovers simultaneously. Although Bradac claims that the acquaintance trajectory is stable, our data revealed that some social acquaintances could become close friends and then lovers, suggesting continuity among these 'friendship' forms.

By using the term *mudhara* the speaker treated the addressee as a joking partner in order to draw him into an amicable settlement. This behaviour is consistent with Radcliffe-Brown's (1971: 106) view that, "joking occurs at tension point... and serves to maintain an equilibrium between the conjunctive and the disjunctive components of intrasocial relationships."

But, best friends also share a (real) joking relationship. Thus, we observed many occasions where teenage friends address each other as *mudhara*, especially as a negotiation device. Where one is addressing a stranger or a friend, the term *mudhara* appeals to the addressee's sense of maturity, tolerance, and light-heartedness, associated with an adult.

Since close male friends share a joking relationship similar to the one an uncle/grandfather shares with his nephew or grandson, they can address each other as *kule/kulez*, to indicate a high level of intimacy. There are a few occasions where young women addressed their male close friends as *kule* to imply a high intensity of friendship. However, we learnt from interviews that some married women address or refer to their lovers as *sekuru* (uncle) to disguise an illicit relationship.

Some male speakers address or refer to male acquaintances as *chikwata* to imply membership of social network, work or social acquaintanceship. A person may introduce someone he frequently participates in a social activity with, such as buying and selling some commodities or board the same bus to and from some place as *chikwata*. The speaker and the referent may not know each other's name in spite of the high frequency of interaction. Thus, the term *chikwata* indexes a level of

acquaintance that guarantees some limited rights and obligations but not a level of commitment required of close friends or lovers.

The term *muface* (acquaintance) has the highest frequency of use by both men and women of different age groups and social classes, although it is more prevalent among teenagers. While male speakers use the term *muface* to refer to a male social acquaintance, some teenage women use it to refer to a lover. We recorded the following conversation between two female University of Zimbabwe students, Lucia age 19 and Gertrude, age 21:

18. Lucia: Wapedza *assignment* iya here Geti?
(Have you finished that assignment Geti?)

Gertrude: Ndichati ndopedza zvangu.
Ndinomhanyirei?
(What's the rush? I will finish later.)

Lucia: Asi Mathias *muface* wako kani? *Last time* wakapiwa mabhuku akanyimwa *class* yese.
(Are you dating Mathias? I recall the last time he leant you those books that he refused to give everyone else.)

Gertrude: Inga ndakakuudza wani kuti *mutop face* wangu!
(I thought I told you that he is my lover!)

The term *face* modified with the word *top* (very close) connotes a pyramidal or very intense relationship.

We also observed cases where service or social acquaintances may address each other as *muface* for affective reasons. A motorist pulls at a service station (during the fuel crisis period) and requests to have a container filled with petrol (against operational rules at that time). When the attendant refused to do so, the motorist pleaded:

19. Haikona kudaro sahwira. Uri *muface*
wangu iwewe. Nzwisisa wena!
(Do not treat me like that my friend.
You are my very close acquaintance.
Please be lenient with me!)

In this case the speaker uses the address term as a persuasive device. He uses *muface* as an indicator of his relational belief. Bradac (146) says that, “there are labels which indicate the relational form which speakers have in mind when referring to their associations with other people.”

Men or women can refer to each other or those of the opposite sex as *homi*, short form for *homeboy* or *homegirl*, meaning one who comes from the same home area as the speaker. This term is often used to address a person of the same or adjacent generation. It implies social acquaintanceship deriving from shared geographical origins. Thus, *homi* may be categorised as an ethnic label reflexive of shared identity, unity and shared heritage. Some form of kinship is always insinuated and rights and obligations entitled to kin claimed.

We shall describe the use of terms that refer to lovers in more detail in the following section since it is men who use virtually all of them to refer to women.

8.2.4 *Gender-related terms*

Most of the gender-related slang terms that occur in our data are those used by men to refer to women. This implies slang term usage is largely non-reciprocal. Many feminist linguists (e.g. Thorne and Henley 1975, Wolfson 1989, Romaine 1994) have linked this non-reciprocity to power asymmetrical relations between men and women. Teenagers of all social classes use slang terms for females to address or refer to their lovers and unacquainted girls as part of “street remarks” (Mashiri 2000a) or male talk. We observed very few occasions where women address or refer to men using slang terms. The few occasions involve commercial sex workers, club patrons and commuter bus conductors, students and informal traders. The terms, used by both men and women that we discuss in this section are of the endearment type. We will discuss insults in the next chapter, although it is hard to rule out the offensiveness of endearment terms.

We shall begin with terms that men use to address their lovers and those they use only as reference terms. The most popular terms are *bhebhi* (baby), *chimoko* (attractive girl), *gero* (girl), *mothers* (mother) and *pangolin*. All these terms are used in greetings, praises, requests, apologies and compliments. We have already come across greetings, praises and requests. We need to define what compliments and apologies as speech acts entail. The definitions will provide insight to the speakers’ intentions in using slang terms of address with these acts.

Complimenting is a speech act that implies the use of politeness strategies. Holmes (1988: 446) defines compliment as

A speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978) paying a compliment is a positive politeness strategy that addresses the hearer's positive face. A compliment such as "*Wakachena bhebhi*" (That's a nice dress, baby.) conveys approval and admiration.

Like compliments, apology is also another form of politeness strategy. Holmes (1990) differentiates compliments and apologies: Compliments focus on the addressee's positive wants, whereas apologies are generally aimed at face redress associated with face threatening acts or offences which have damaged the addressee's face in some respect and can therefore be regarded as what Brown and Levinson called as negative politeness strategies.

When used in greetings *bhebhi* and *chimoko* indicate close intimacy, in requests and apologies the terms generally have some persuasive effect and in compliments they serve to diffuse a tense situation (in which case the compliment is not genuine) and to delight the addressee. We were not able to establish the origins of *chimoko*, but we noted that whenever speakers use it in direct address, it implies the same thing as *bhebhi*. The term *bhebhi* "alludes to child-like attributes such as sweetness and tenderness, and when intended as a compliment, focusses only on a woman's physical attractiveness" (Mashiri 2000: 62).

We observed some male vendors jokingly addressing their female workmates as *mothers* while they are called *fathers*. The work context tends to level out participants, that is, their ‘companionship’ seem to transcend the usual boundaries of age and marital status to create a close, quasi-familial relationship that clearly (and equitably) enriches the lives of members. The use of the terms *mothers* and *fathers* in this context indicates the vendors’ camaraderie resulting from long periods of interpersonal contact and shared struggles against city authorities. This bond is also reflected in the vendors’ team spirit, evident in the operational style. Any member of the group can sell another member’s goods during his/her absence and they practice a system of paying each other fixed amounts of money in turns to assist members maintain a stable financial base for sustaining their business. This practice is popularly known as *round*, from the system of paying members in turns.

Men can use the terms *mothers* and *pangolin* as praise names for their lovers or any woman whom they intend to lure. In ordinary English grammar, it is ungrammatical to address or refer to one person as *mothers*, that is, in the plural. But, slang, like nicknames, derive its humour and import from breaking linguistic rules (de Klerk 1998: 4). In private, *mothers* and *pangolin* have a flattering effect. On the one hand *mothers* connotes tenderness, warmth and love associated with motherliness and *pangolin* indexes rare beauty and classiness epitomising “the rare animal which is beautiful to look at and is supposed to be a delicacy for chiefs” (Mushava 1999) and a good omen to anyone who picks it up. The use of these terms to flatter or bully a woman in public is associated either with sexual advance or mere public play.

We observed that some men who hang out in groups on street corners often make sexual advances on female passers-by. The sexual advance may take the form of a compliment or an invitation, sometimes made in good faith, but may turn out to be unwelcome. Depending on the addressee's response, sexual advances may degenerate into an insult of a sexual nature or sexual harassment on the one hand, and may lead to courtship conversation or to the speaker withdrawing quietly, on the other hand. We observed a young man talking to a high school senior student in uniform at a bus line in the city. Their conversation went thus:

20. Man: Hesi *mothers*!
(Hello lady)

(Silence)

Man: Hindava kurova maserious?
(What is the matter?)

Girl: Hapana. Ndaneta.
(Nothing. I'm just exhausted)

Man: Saka ndeipi?
(How are you doing?)

Girl: Hapana.
(Nothing special.)

Man: Sha, pandakuona ndaita kunge ndanhonga *pangolin* chaiyo.
(Friend, when I saw you I got stunned as if I had found a pangolin.)

Girl: (laughter) Ho-o!
(Really!)

Although the term *pangolin* is used as a slang word, it is an animal metaphor that depicts a woman as food. This linguistic behaviour is not unique to Shona. Ivy and Backlund (1994) discuss the use of animal, food and plant terms, in English, as labels

for women and men and interpret them as demeaning and sexist⁵⁰. However, from a pragmatic point of view, praising a woman using an animal or food metaphor, especially in courtship discourse or sexual advance has a flattering or patronising effect.

It is not uncommon for a man to shout a slang term of address to an unknown woman walking in the street, (e.g. a young man in the company of some friends calls at a woman walking on a pavement at the West Gate shopping mall:

21. *Mothers* tiri kukumbirawo kutaura
nemi.
(Lady can I please have a word with
you.)

The woman keeps on walking quietly and the other man in the group comments loudly enough for the referent to hear,

22. *Chidanger chimoko. Gero* rakabatana
shamwari!
(What a nice looking woman. The girl
has rounded features, my friend!)

In a follow-up discussion that we had with this group of three young men (21-35 years), their response to the question, “*Muri kuda kunyadzisa chimoko here boys?*” (Guys, do you wish to embarrass this girl?) was, “*Tiri kutamba zvedu*” (We are just joking.). The young men’s behaviour and response are not unique to them. We, in this study and in Mashiri (2000a), noted a high occurrence of similar male behaviour,

⁵⁰ Several scholars (e.g. Chitauro 1995, Sutton 1992, Whaley and Antonelli 1984, Frank and Ashen 1983, Stanley 1977b) discuss a number of ways in which men refer to women derogatorily using, among other devices, animal metaphors. Informed by the feminist thinking, these scholars emphasise the asymmetrical and sexist nature of men’s language for referring to women.

particularly in the area between Rezende Street and Kaguvi Street and on the southwestern part of the city and in construction sites.

From a feminist point of view this kind of male behaviour is perceived as “bullying”. Bullying is widespread in the public domain where thugs, terrorists, chauvinists and racists impose their will on the weak, and in corporate institutions where unscrupulous superiors exploit an insidious power structure. In the case of the latter, though speakers (usually) use knives only metaphorically, “words can be used to discomfort or even terrorise a victim” (Goldstein 2002: 53). Although discourse transcripts cited here involve elements of bullying, we classify them instead as ‘play’ since they involve joking and teasing. Normally joking and teasing with unacquainted women is inappropriate, yet it is not uncommon, perhaps because they offer a smooth transition into courtship discourse.

This type of “play” dominant on the streets of Harare has its origins in the commuter transport, flea market and street corner selling traditions. Typical of these cultures are network groups, widespread loitering and soliciting and unsolicited talk embedded with teases and coarse verbal taboos tantamount to what we called in (Mashiri 2000a) “ a breach of civil inattention”. Commenting on ‘Black talk on the streets’ among African Americans, Abrahams (1989: 241) says, “playing is an important way in which one distinguishes oneself in public, and engaging in witty verbal exchanges is one important way of playing.” This is true of the Harare street culture although further research would be needed to establish its comparability with American Black street culture.

We shall attempt to define ‘play’ in more detail in Chapter 9 when discussing use of abuse terms. However, for now we note that calling out slang terms of address on women as a way “playing” or unsolicited joking tends to violate the addressee’s negative face. Some of the terms that men call out at conspicuous female characters walking on the streets are *lapsus/malappy* (lipstick), *tsvukas* (light skinned), *dimba* (quelea). Conspicuous characters include women who wear bright lipstick and heavy make-up, those who wear short skirts and tight jeans and those with stylish gait. Thus, *lapsus* or *malappy* indexes some men’s dislike of overdone lipstick stereotypically associated with soliciting. The term *tsvukas* may be used affectionately to refer to light-skinned women. The affection comes from the historical perception that lighter and brighter skin meant beauty and sexual attractiveness. This perception was inculcated by the multinational marketing strategies for soaps and skin lighteners in the 1960s. We shall quote Burke (1996) elaborately for a comprehensive background:

Just as the rhetoric of various Lever soap promotions was nestled among larger patterns of advertising directed at Africans in Zimbabwe, the promotional language surrounding skin lighteners tapped into a number of established themes. Bu-Tone products of various kinds – talcum powder, creams, and lotions – had been around since the 1940s, but Bu-Tone skin lighteners, along with other brands like Ambi and Hi-light, only took off dramatically in Zimbabwe in the 1960s. Many of these products contained hydroquinone, a chemical that can cause potentially serious damage to the skin. The advertising of skin lighteners rapidly became a major feature of popular publications like Parade, and tapped into established marketing themes involving class aspiration, sexual attractiveness, and proper appearance. The most important appeals, however, involved an equally established theme in advertising: the conflation of whiteness, purity and social power (158-9).

Lightening creams were by their nature about the transformation of the ‘traditional’ African self into something the advertisers argued would be more commensurate with ‘modern’ society. Initially, women were disproportionately the targets of these campaigns. Associating the lighter and brighter face with cleanliness, whiteness, purity, beauty, modernity, power and affluence and the darker one with dirt, blackness, ugliness, traditional, subservience and poverty became embedded into the language. The adjective *tsvuku* (bright) connoted beauty and attractiveness. Thus, ‘victims’ of skin lighteners epitomised the model woman that every man aspired to date.

We noted that in some contexts men use the slang term *tsvukas* to derogatorily refer to light skinned women. *Tsvukas* in this context implies superficial beauty meant to entice or tempt men. Hence, women with conspicuously light and bright faces would be labelled morally loose. This social meaning of the term *tsvukas* is derived from the cultural nationalist discourse that developed, especially in urban areas, concurrently with the marketing of whiteness discourse. The cultural nationalist discourse advocated the rejection of artificiality or ‘whiteness’ and the return to authenticity or ‘blackness’ both in thought and behaviour. Therefore, the use of the term *tsvukas* to denigrate light skinned women correlates with the traditional idiomatic expressions “*mukadzi mutsvuku akasaroya anoba*” and “*guyu kutsvuka kunze mukati mune masvosve*”. Both proverbs warn people against superficial appearances that may lead to tragic circumstances.

Contrary to the *lapsus* and *tsvukas* that emphasise physical characteristics, *timba* refers to personality. A *timba* is a small elusive bird that feeds on wheat. Because of its elusiveness the bird gives farmers a hard time catching it before it destroys their crop. An elusive woman, one who is hard to lure is likened to a *timba*. This term tends to suggest positive attributes since men believe that a cultured and well-mannered woman is one who is mysterious and hard to pin down.

The only occasions where we observed women addressing male strangers on the street using slang terms involve commercial sex workers. This address practice is a form of ‘courtship’ where individual women or groups of women hanging out at their night-time soliciting corner call out at a man passing by (mostly by car and occasionally, on foot). The women use the terms *sweetie*, *lovie* and *shaz* vocatively, in greetings or invitations. We recorded such utterances as,

- 23 (a) *Hi sweetie, uyaka short-time.*
(Hello sweet heart, would you like quick sex.)
- (b) *Uyaka tikwirane shaz ugondipawo mari yesadza.*
(Come my friend lets have sex so that I get just enough for a meal.)

The slang terms, together with sexually explicit terms such as *short time* and “*tikwirane*” (so that we have sex), are loaded with affective meaning, being used mainly to arouse and encourage the male addressee or potential client.

It appears that sex workers violate all social rules of verbal behaviour ascribed to women not only by using taboo words but also by taking an aggressive and active role in sex negotiations. One could hypothesise that operating under the cover of darkness makes the women “faceless,” and antisocial. In addition, this interactive context, the impersonality and temporary nature of the relationships the women have with clients and the anonymous identities maintained are conducive for the violation of linguistic taboos.

8.2.5 *Surreptitious terms*

Surreptitious terms in this section refer to a type of restricted code that speakers use to disguise information or messages from outsiders. In other words, the terms are meant to benefit insiders and disadvantage outsiders. With regards to slang terms of address, it was quite difficult to elicit surreptitious terms from most social networks. Social groups that often develop and use secret codes tend to be associated with criminal or illegal activities which are punishable by law, and therefore, secrecy is one of the major objectives when using their ‘language’ and when dealing with a ‘stranger’. The few terms that we got from vendors and *tsotsis* (thieves) do not necessarily reflect a paucity of slang terms of address among these network groups or others. A large repertoire of such terms may exist, but, because “language changes rapidly... it is easy to learn the slang words, but it is hard to keep up to date” (Anderson and Trudgill 1990: 79).

City by-laws regard street vending as illegal unless it is carried out in places that are properly designated. Yet, Harare streets are clogged with illegal vendors who risk losing their goods to the [Municipal] police or face prosecution. For this reason,

vendors create and use special vocabulary, which is solely intelligible to them to inform each other of police presence. The terms with the greatest frequency of occurrence are *menispambi* (municipal police), *mahovhanga* (men in overalls), *majiti* (those who jump and land swiftly from trucks) and *mangwazi* (police officers).

The terms *menispambi* and *mahovhanga* are more popular with fruit, vegetable and food vendors than petrol, paraffin vendors and moneychangers. Vendors use these terms vocatively to alert their folks of a pending raid by municipal police. Of the two terms, *mahovhanga* is the more derogatory and a recent one deriving from the overall uniform used by a security company that the Harare city council hired to forcibly drive away vendors from the streets.

While *majiti* captures the way law enforcement agents suddenly appears and jumps from the trucks to catch vendors, vegetable, fruit and food vendors use it to refer to municipal police officers, whereas, those who sell petrol and paraffin use it refer to Zimbabwe republic police officers. Therefore these two types of vendors belong to different ‘speech communities’ as defined by Dell Hymes (1972). The meaning or illocutionary force of the term *majiti* depends on the group membership of the speaker. Thus, the manner in which members of one group interpret the reference of the term distinguishes them from members of the other group since, members of a speech community “share rules of the conduct and interpretation of speech” (Hymes 1972: 54). Common between the groups, however, is the contempt implied in the terms used to refer to law enforcement agents.

We relied on vendors and commuter touts in identifying *matsotsi* (pick pockets) in the city and at Mbare rural bus terminus. It appears that some touts double as *matsotsi* and touts. Therefore, they know the secret vocabulary used in either sub-culture. When posing as bus conductors, touts address each other jokingly as *hwindi* (tout) indexing their role of lifting and loading heavy luggage on the bus and showing people their buses, but when talking about their thieving expeditions they address each other as *mukorokoza* (gold panner). To the ordinary person *makorokoza* refer to gold panners, but to the thieves the term celebrates their pick pocketing exploits and references their group identity. Like gold panning, thieving is risky but could turn one into a multimillionaire over night.

When alerting members of their group of police presence, some thieves, for example at the Mbare bus terminus, either whistle or call out “*Madikaz*,” (CIDs) *Boys dzesmoke* (plain-clothes police officers), *mudhogano* (dogs), and *bhombino* (green bombers for militia in green uniform) and *machinda* (fellows). All these terms hide information not only from the referents but from the general public as well. Thieves use them for boundary construction and maintenance. Writing on the use of language in the maintenance of ethnic boundaries in North America, Khleif (1979: 159) comments that, “if boundary maintenance is the *sine qua non* of group survival, then we can see how boundaries are inextricably linked to two issues of group life: socialization and social control, that is, the regulation of interaction for members and non-members.” Thieves use these secretive terms to sustain their activities and to give them a sense of a field of their own or exclusivity.

The terms *madikaz*, *mudhogano*, and *bhombino* show linguistic creativity and playfulness akin to nicknaming. This is suggestive of both enjoyment with language and masking. *Mudhogano* indicate thieves' extreme hate of criminal investigation officers since their interrogative style is as hard-nosed as a dog attack. While *bhombino* is derived from "Green bombers" from the green uniform that militias wear, the terms signal the militia's effectiveness in protecting members of the public from thieves at the Mbare bus terminus. The way the militia rid the terminus of thieves is compared to the efficiency of bombs. Thus, *bhombino* captures the users' negative disposition towards the militias.

The terms *boys dzesmoke* and *machinda* seems to be the most recent coinages. The term "boys dzesmoke" is derived from the nickname for the musical group Chazezesa Express the late musician System Tazvida led. The youth use the word *smoke* in such expressions as "*kwaita smoke*" (there is smoke), "*paine smoke*" (there is smoke) or simply "*ismoke*" (it is smoky) to imply a serious dilemma or difficulty. When used by the Chazezesa Express for themselves, *boys dzesmoke* meant great entertainers. But when thieves use the term to refer to plain-clothes police officers they index the fear that the officers instil in them. Therefore, the term serves as a warning sign to in-group members. The term *machinda* indicate the disguised identity of non-uniformed police officers and the threat that they pose to law-breakers, either through infiltration or raids.

What is clear from social meanings of the slang terms discussed here is that the interpretation of these meanings is determined by one's membership to a group of vendors or thieves. Group membership guarantees privileged knowledge. The

availability of a number of alternative terms for referring to one and the same category of people reveals the fluidity of slang terms used to disguise or conceal information. As Mojela (2002: 206) says, this is due to the fact that,

A secret term is only secret for some time before it is known by other people, which obviously forces the users of the term to find another secret term for the same concept to keep the secrecy.

This is mostly the case with all the illegal and unlawful activities that might lead to the speakers being arrested.

8.3 Summary

In this chapter, we demonstrated that Shona speakers, especially male teenagers, use five categories of slang terms of address and reference: kinship terms, status terms, friendship terms, gender-related terms and surreptitious terms. The terms are used to address or refer to both acquainted and unacquainted persons. Although there are women who use slang to address their women folk or males, slang use is generally a male domain, first because society socialises women against such ‘indecent’ speech habits, and secondly, because the streets, where most slang terms are created, popularised and used are considered primarily a man’s rather than a woman’s territory.

However, it was clear from our data that the linguistic conservative nature of women referred to in the introduction to this chapter has been exaggerated. Commercial sex workers’ use of “dirty words” reflects the non-conservativeness of women’s speech. Although more men use slang than women, our data has revealed that both men and

women are linguistic innovators and sometimes there is overlap in male and female speech, especially among the lower working-class speakers.

Patterns of slang terms of address and reference usage vary depending on the kinship relationship between the speaker and the addressee or referent, the addressee/referent's age, status, sex, social network group membership, and the speaker's attitudes and the intended function of the term. For example, children can only use slang terms for their parents in reference and not in address, unless usage is determined by a conscious intention to index particular social meanings; siblings, friends, or people who share a joking relationship can use slang terms to address or refer to each other reciprocally.

As part of street culture, especially in crowded downtown areas, men tend to call out joking remarks and slang names at unacquainted women (especially those conspicuously dressed) in commuter buses, on termini or passing by these public places. Speakers may hail address terms at unacquainted women as sexual advances or deliberate insult. Our discussions in Chapter 9 will shed more light on the difference between sexual advances and deliberate insults, on the one hand, and playful insults and serious insults, on the other hand. But, suffice to say that most sexual advances are not coercive in intent. As Hajdin (1997: 37-38) writes,

The most typical reason for making a sexual advance is the hope that it will be accepted and that its acceptance will result in some kind of fulfilment and happiness for both of the parties involved.

On the contrary, deliberate insults are meant to give the insulter satisfaction and to diminish or demean the insultee.

Chapter 9 will pursue the notion of ‘play’ that we demonstrated in this chapter. We shall define ‘play’ in the context of insult or light abuse and distinguish it from heavy abuse. But, we shall demonstrate that endearment and abuse are not entirely discrete entities. They exist on a continuum, with endearment on the friendlier and politer end of the continuum and abuse on the unfriendly and impolite end of the continuum.

In tightly knit network groups such as vendors and thieves, slang terms function as what Bernstein (1972) calls a ‘restricted’ mode of speaking (in which the speaker does not make verbally explicit his or her meanings). Slang terms of address derive their social meanings from speakers’ shared experience and knowledge and these meanings may be hidden from outsiders.

We illustrated how speakers use slang address and reference terms in various speech acts and how the meanings of these terms depend on the context of their use and the speakers’ intention. The same is assumed of insults discussed in the next chapter. Contrary to slang, however, insults constitute what Zahn (1989) calls “high-intensity” language. What is meant by ‘high-intensity’ or powerful speech style is however, culture-specific. We regard insults as more powerful than slang in that the former is coarser and antisocially stronger.

CHAPTER 9

INSULTS⁵¹

9.1 Introduction

The analysis of insults seems to be the logical way to end this thesis for two reasons. First, in most chapters we underscored the primacy of respect and/or politeness in Shona address and reference practices, whether in the family or in social circles, whether on the employment scene or between friends or lovers. It was clear that politeness is relative rather than absolute. In the latter case an address or reference act is polite or rude regardless of context; in the former, the much larger category by far, an act's politeness or rudeness is contingent on context. Hence, perceived degrees of civility depend on people's status and social situations and their relationships to each other, among other things. In this chapter, we shall show that impoliteness is as rife as politeness and that address and reference patterns relevant to marking impoliteness vary according to the same factors that determine respect.

Second, in Chapter 1, we stressed the importance of distinguishing literal meaning from social meaning, since this distinction is fundamental to the pragmatic import of address and reference vocabulary. Our discussion of insults at this point should therefore, reinforce this important position, as insults constitute "high-intensity" language, functioning as the most creative and manipulative communicative devices of all address and reference resources. This is probably so since cultural constraints

⁵¹ We will use the term 'insult' interchangeably with 'terms of abuse'. But the word insult reinforces the intentional force of communication (Mateo and Yus 2000: 97). We are aware of the ethical constraints that have, historically, inhibited the study of this phenomenon. However, we believe that ethnical views should not interfere with language research.

operate more forcefully in the insulting paradigm of any language (Mateo and Yus 2000: 100) and widespread inhibition to study this phenomenon has been made on moralistic grounds.

Insults come in many forms; verbal, non-verbal in the form of action such as displaying or destroying a symbol or slamming a door in the face, or visual: inappropriate or provocative gestures such as flags, symbols or graffiti. Our concern in this chapter is limited to verbal insults or verbal abuse. Before we delimit the scope of our investigation, we shall now provide examples of definitions of insults.

According to Mateo and Yus (2000), insults are “locutions and utterances with the basic (but not the only) intention to hurt an addressee emotionally” (97). Writing on sexual insults Goldstein (2002: 50) points out

The aim of a deliberate insult of a sexual nature is to give a kind of satisfaction to the person who is making it at the expense of the person insulted. In other words, its aim is to increase the well being of the person making it and decreasing the well being of the person subjected to it. And not only are deliberate insults intended to produce the decrease in the well-being of the persons to whom they are directed, but they almost always do in fact produce it.

What is clear from both definitions is that insults are other directed, that is, they are communicatively bound. However, self-directed and zero-directed insults such as swearwords are also common. Speakers usually use self-directed or zero-directed insults as a sort of catharsis, “a tension relief when they feel stressed or need to release a high emotional strain” (Mateo and Yus, 2000: 102). A typical example is the

use of the vocative “*Shit!*”⁵² by many Zimbabweans. Since our concern is the pragmatic or communicative significance of address and reference terms, we shall limit ourselves, first, to proper and common nouns that are used as address or reference insults, and second, to those that are directed at other interlocutors (second or third person).

This means that we also leave other related linguistic strategies such as swearing and cursing aside. In fact, swearing and cursing would be at the other end of the communicative exchange. Psychologists (Freud, Adler, Murray, and others) relate swearing and cursing to personality and introspection. Apparently there is no intention to communicate anything but to show rebellious self-centredness around individualistic emotions such as frustration, power, revenge and pain.

Other directed insults are of two types: those directed at a second person in a face-to-face exchange between the speaker and hearer or speaker and addressee(s) and those directed at (an) absent third referent(s). From a pragmatic point of view, insults require a close interaction between interlocutors. Therefore, it is important that the addressee(s) are present and hear the uttered abuses. Those insults directed to the second person normally include the second person pronoun (in bold case below) so as to make it clear this is a face-to-face exchange between interlocutors (e.g. *Uri mbwa* “You are a dog”). Usually, there is no point in insulting an absent third person, who is, after all, not going to be targeted, except for cases where the speaker shares her/his

⁵² The term *shit* is borrowed from English as ‘*bull shit*,’ realised in Shona as *bhuratishiti*. When used in this Shonalised form in Shona discourse, like *fokoro/fokofu* (fuck you), *shiti* loses a great deal of its force (cf. Brothers 1995: 350-355). Thus, it has become a swear word that imply both negative and positive. Our analogue derives from the assumption that insults are culture bond. Therefore, not all insults work with the same efficiency in two different languages.

insulting moment with some ‘comrade(s)’ and direct their insults to an absent third party.

Besides being used as linguistic weapons, our data shows that insults can also be used in a playful or flattering manner, showing admiration towards the interlocutor. In this instance, insults are perceived as indexing camaraderie. These insults are usually followed by the right intonation, gesture or paralinguistic mechanism to avoid unwanted interpretations. Thus, face-to-face insults carry different implications depending upon the relationship of the parties and the para-verbal cues given off by the insulter. Calling a friend *ngochani* (homosexual) can even be a non-sexual term of comradeship if spoken correctly.

The definitions cited above also refer to the speaker’s intention and the elocutionary effect of insults. These factors, together with the categories of insults based on patients or ‘insultee(s)’ we have just described, bring us to the main categories of insults reflected in our data. Our data reveals that address and reference terms which Shona speakers use as insults fall into two broad categories: playful and serious or ritual and personal insults (Labov 1972: 35-40, Kochman 1983: 332-4, Tannock 1999: 322-23).

Early and recent sociolinguistic studies of insulting routines in the US, especially, have focussed on playful or ritual insults among homogenous groups in terms of gender, class and race. Early studies identified ritual insults as distinctively African-American and male discursive forms (Labov 1972, Hannerz 1969, Kochman 1972, Abrahams 1976). In these studies ritual insults are known by alternative names such

as ‘sounding’, ‘playing the dozens’, ‘black verbal duelling’, among other terms. Ritual insulting among African-American males involves “an extended and competitive exchange of insults, in which two (or more) individuals attempt to out-perform one another by coming up with insults that are more outrageous and cleverer” Tannock (1999: 322).

More recent studies in the US (e.g. Mitchell-Kernan 1972, Folb 1980, Goodwin 1990) have identified behaviour akin to ritual insulting among many population groups other than black males. These include, black females (Mitchell-Kernan 1972, Goodwin 1990), white males (Leary 1980), and white females (Eder 1990). Of all the scholars on ritual insults, only Labov and Kochman have attempted to describe ritual insults in relation to serious or personal insults. According to Labov (1972: 335), ritual insults are recognised by black participants as being distinct from ‘personal insults’ in that they are known not to be literally true. The implication of Labov’s assertion is that ritual insults are connotative whereas personal insults are denotative. Kochman (1983) questioned Labov’s opposition between ritual and personal insults. Kochman suggests that listener uptake rather than true value, determines whether an insult is regarded as being playful (ritual) or serious (personal). The implication of this, as Kochman notes, and as our data will show, is that the boundaries between ritual and personal, or playful and serious interactions are much less stable and clear than Labov’s framework would suggest.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of the speaker’s intention and the function of an insult, we shall show that interlocutors normally utter or exchange playful insulting address and reference terms teasingly, under “circumstances and within relationships

where it is most plausible for the antagonistic statement to be framed and understood as play” (Eisenberg 1986: 185). The teasing element evident in playful insults implies that playful insulting routines occur in association with teasing.

A teasing sequence is a conversational sequence that opens with a mock challenge, insult or threat. As in playful insults, a key feature of the teasing sequence is that the teaser does not intend the recipient “to continue to believe the utterance is true, although he/she may intend the recipient to believe it initially” (Eisenberg 1986: 182). Both playful insults and teasing have two primary, and sometimes overlapping, purposes: having fun and social control. Although playful insults and teasing are basically distinct speech acts, it appears rather difficult and unnecessary to treat them separately in considering address and reference acts⁵³.

Contrary to playful insults, speakers utter or exchange serious insults to provoke, shame or harm the addressee or referent. Whether the recipient of the insult is an acquaintance or a stranger, the mood of the interactive situation, the phonological features of the utterances, will show the seriousness of the insult. Chick (1997: 421) defines provocations as “acts whose elocutionary effect is disharmony or polarisation between [individuals and] groups...” Shaming is a verbal form of social control that achieves its purpose through violating negative politeness and thus reducing and denigrating the recipient.

The preceding description sounds as if the task to distinguish a playful from a serious insult is quite easy for the addressee. In the many instances, the interpretation appears

⁵³ Scholars working on the expressive affect of language in child socialisation in varied cultures (cf. Schiefelin 1986, Eisenberg 1986, Miller 1986) give elaborate descriptions of teasing as socialisation and verbal play, in some instances highlighting its connection with shaming.

complex due to the number of factors involved in the insulting context. As our data analysis will reveal, the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, style, the situation of the interaction and the clarity of the speaker's insulting intention also determine whether an insult is playful or serious. It is assumed that when the speaker and the addressee belong to the same social network, their shared experience and shared knowledge of the rules that govern speech in such relationships (Farb 1974: 4-8) would enable the addressee to interpret an insult correctly. Moreover, insulting routines require a complex degree of interaction between the interlocutors where the speaker must make his/her insulting intention clear enough to his addressee(s), so as to guarantee the grasp of the right meaning. Therefore, an addressee does not glean the insulting message on the basis of the meanings of words alone, but out of the interaction of these contextual elements.

Our data demonstrate that both playful and serious Shona insults manipulate existing words to add explicit overtones. Basically, they have a connotative nature, resort to metaphor and sometimes, absurd analogies and nonsensical images along with a strong creative drive. In that respect, insults pertain both to the domain of metaphor and to the innovative use of the language. According to Wilson (1990: 105), "metaphors represent core examples of language use where any intended meaning is normally assumed to be located beyond the surface structure of the sentence/utterance."

If this is so, then a metaphorical concept must be one that is derived by comparing one thing with another, which suggests that it is not literal. Searle (1979a) argues that in using metaphors speakers say S is P but mean (metaphorically) that S is R. For

example, when A insults B as “*Bhasiteti!*” (Bastard), the surface (denotative) meaning of the insult is that B is a person born out of wedlock, the connotative meaning is that B is an unwanted product of illicit sex, and consequently a legally inferior and socially undesirable person, but metaphorically, B is not illegitimate, but is nevertheless undesirable. This is an example of what Cooper (1986) calls the ‘standard view’ of metaphor⁵⁴.

We shall now address two pertinent questions, before we analyse the data: what forms do insulting address and reference terms take and who insults? First, it is important to underscore that speakers draw both playful and serious insults from the same repertoire of insults. Whether an insult is playful or serious depends on the sociolinguistic factors underlying the interactional act itself. Our data clearly divides abuse terms in terms of the Shona speakers’ perception of “dirtiness” or “heaviness”: light/medium and heavy. In the first category are, names of animals, names of low professions/occupations, physical defects, mental defects, moral defects, proper names, and labels for despised (ethnic) identity, and terms for language and social attitudes and in the second group are expletives and non-expletives.

It may be said that the insults are marked as light, medium or heavy depending on the level of expressiveness. Some of the terms used as insults appear like nicknames. The difference between using a name as an insult and as a nickname is that insults normally do not last longer than the occasion of use, whereas nicknames may last for as long as one’s childhood, adolescence, adulthood or life time.

⁵⁴ The theoretical debates on the nature of metaphors, the dead/live continuum and the underlying principles relating to meaning interpretation (Grice 1975, Searle 1979a, Schon 1979, Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Davidson 1984, Cooper 1986, Sperber and Wilson 1986, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003) are outside the scope of this study. Our concern is to confirm that metaphors are pragmatic phenomena in that when words acquire metaphorical meanings they attain insulting overtones.

We observed that usages of playful insults, light, medium or heavy, often involve friends (both same/opposite sex) lovers, and members of the same social network who may not be friends or lovers. Among same-sex participants, playful insulting (name-calling) is most frequent among adolescents and adults. Male-female routines are more common among children and adolescents than in older age groups, as older women become increasingly concerned (at least when in the company of males) with respectability and social norms that sanction female public behaviour. This pattern of usage is consistent with Eder's (1990) observations of male-female exchanges of insults in the US. Within the family domain, siblings may call each other names while caregivers and parents also tease children using abuse terms of address or reference. But, as the data analysis will show, we came across very isolated instances of parents or caregivers who use heavy insults to address children.

In our data, parents use serious insults to address children; teachers, students; children, strangers; men, unacquainted women and occasionally, women, unacquainted men. Both men and women also use them frequently in service encounters, especially in street-related settings and activities as we outlined in the previous chapter. Exchange of insults by siblings, relatives, neighbours, lovers and housemates are not uncommon.

The insults also range from light to heavy depending on the individual participants and the situation. Commercial sex-workers, for example, hurl heavy abuses on rivals or on unscrupulous clients, in broad daylight, even in the presence of children. Similarly, children playing on the street call out heavy insults at motorists or other

children. The question arising from this description is whether insult usage is class biased or not.

We established in Chapter 8 that slang usage occurs most frequently in working-class (WC) speech. WC speech is generally seen as one that makes use of the vernacular and is often linked with masculinity, toughness and having some kind of prestige (Trudgill 1983, de Klerk 1991, Hughes 1992). Vernacular and insulting tend to be linked and WC speech is assumed to be full of obscenities. The use of profanity by members of the WC is sometimes judged as due to their being uneducated, and lack of education results in having an inadequate vocabulary with which to handle their situation.

While our data also reveals more insult usage, (especially in public) in WC speech than in middle-class (MC) speech, the reasons for this distinction have nothing to do with the WC's level of education. Interviews with some users of heavy insults revealed that they desire to shame or denigrate MC or pseudo-middle-class people "*vanoshaina*" (who act classy). Such language is shocking to the middle class, and as such becomes a powerful anti-middle-class weapon. In addition, it appears that, "social malaise" (Milroy 1980: 72-73), that is, unemployment, family disintegration, homelessness, juvenile crime, etc, have impacted negatively on institutions that sanction individual behaviour, including speech, among the WC more than the MC.

We are not suggesting that the WC is a homogenous group with distinct abusive language behaviour. Such a claim would amount to stereotyping. As we pointed out in the preceding chapter, there are many people belonging to the WC whose speech does

not include any slang or abusive terms. Similarly, there are some MC people who use the crudest of terms in certain circumstances. But, generally, as our data will show, MC parents tend to insult their children using lighter terms than their WC counterparts.

It is quite obvious from our data that men use insults much more than women, especially in public. This means that there are some sex differences in insult usage. However, by and large, it seems that there is more overall sexual differences in speech in some groups than in others, for example, socio-economic, age, occupational and religious. It appears that WC women tend to use abuse terms used by men more frequently than MC women. Coates and Cameron's (1988) claim that the WC women's use of insults is an integral part of their language also applies to the Shona community. Those who use the insults do not really care if other people (middle class or otherwise) are offended or shocked by their use of insults. As stated earlier, sometimes they use the insults as a weapon, but also through sheer habit, and also out of frustration with authorities and others. Our data shows that Jespersen's (1922) ideas of women's speech that, "women have an instinctive shrinking from coarse and gross expressions and a preference for refined and (in certain spheres) veiled and indirect expressions" (cited in Hughes, 1992: 294) has no reality in the language of Shona women.

In the next several sections we discuss individual terms appearing in the data as they are used in varied interactive encounters. The sections will be based on the categories from which insulting terms are derived. In each section we shall highlight where a term is used in a playful manner and where they are used seriously. This approach

allows us to immediately compare the social meanings deriving from the different usages.

9.2 Light and medium insult terms

9.2.1 *Names of animals*

Animal names in the data include *imbwa* (dog), along with *mbwanana* (puppy), and several variants, *mbudzi* (goat), *mbocho* (he-goat), *dhongi* (donkey), *katsi* (cat), *nguruve* (pig), *savara* (crow), *huku* (chicken) and *dhadha* (duck). Of these, *imbwa* has the highest frequency of occurrence.

First, *imbwa* is used as a light term, both in playful and serious discourse. Both WC and MC speakers use this term, although it occurs more in WC speech than in MC speech. We observed same-sex and opposite sex friends, especially adolescents and young adults and same-rank colleagues use the term *imbwa* in teasing each other. We overheard two female University students talk in a hostel foyer:

1. A: Ndiri kuda bhuku rangi rawakaba.
Imbwa yomunhu!
(Return my book that you stole from me. Dog!)
- B: Ibva apa! Handina bhuku rako ini.
(Stop nagging me! I do not have your book.)
- A: Ndikaibva unondidya here? Nhumbu yarwadzaka iyo?
(If I get cooked up, would you eat my flesh? You must be ailing from that pregnancy.)
- B: Shamwari ndanzwa wena.
(The experience is horrible friend.)

(Laughter)

The jocular mood of the conversation and the sharing of personal information and experience such as pregnancy, implies that A and B are close friends. The accusation, that A makes “*bhuku rangu rawakaba*” (my book that you stole), the insult, *imbwa yomunhu*, she directs at B and the comical rhetorical question she asks, “*ndikaibva unondidya here?*” (If I get cooked up, would you eat my flesh?) typify playful teasing associated with buddies. Playful forms such as jokes and laughter also occurring in this conversation index intimacy, since, together with provocative tones, play-faces, as “contextualization cues” (Gumperz 1977), signal playful insulting.

We observed a casual discussion on male-female sexual behaviour that includes faithfulness and unfaithfulness by a group of mixed sex same-rank colleagues at a clothing factory. Part of the conversation went thus:

2. Woman 1: Akatosiya mukadzi nevana
ku*Gunhill* akatonokemba
ne*small house* kuBudiriro.
(He left his wife and kids in Gunhill
for a girl friend living in Budiriro.)
- Woman 2: E-e, nhai!
(I agree, it's such a shameful thing.)
- Man 1: Maida kuti aite sei? Pamwe aibatwa
rough kumba kwacho.
(What option did he have? It's most
likely that his wife ill-treated him.)
- Woman 1: Kwaaniko! Varume muri **mbwa**
chete.
(I disagree. You men are
instinctively dogs.)
- Man 2: Usati tiri mbwa shamwari. Tiri
mbwanana dzisingabvi padzinopiwa
mapfupa.

(Don't call us dogs. We are puppies
that frequent places where they are
feed with bones.)

(Laughter)

The conversation constitutes gossip centred on an absent senior colleague who left his wife and children for a girlfriend. Woman 1 criticises the errant man indirectly by making an impersonalised stereotypical abuse that includes the male participants in the conversation. We noted a similar strategy with pronominal usage in Chapter 4. Calling the referent *imbwa* directly could put the speaker at confrontation with the referent if one of the participants or bystanders went to inform him. Writing on personal reference in English, Murphy (1988: 343) says, “members of the audience may possess images that must be protected, and they may have potential relationships with the referent or speaker that must be respected.” Thus, a speaker is safer avoiding any referring expression that will offend anyone, by making a generalised reference even though all those present know the primary target of the insult. The impersonalised nature of the insult reduces its seriousness.

The response and self-directed insult “*tiri tumbwanana*” (we are puppies), is self-depreciatory. From the point of view of affective meaning, self-depreciation lessens the force of the insult. In fact, the use of “*tiri tumbwanana*” as a proverb contests the “truthfulness” of the insult *imbwa*. The author of the proverb is not the speaker, but the anonymous body of ancestors. Therefore, “the truth of this utterance is incontestable, and this is a considerable strategic advantage” (Schottman 1993: 543). The male speaker’s act of seeking solace in proverbial lore is a way of protecting the referent’s [and men’s in general] ‘face’.

We also observed young women's frequent use of the insult *imbwa* to unacquainted men who provoke or (verbally or physically) abuse them on the street. Sometimes the heavier variant form *zimbwa* (a big dog) is used to index disgusting behaviour on the part of the addressee and extreme anger, on the part of the speaker. For example, one tout teases a young woman loitering at a bus stop in the city, seemingly contemplating ways to jump the line, saying,

3. Sisdom, uyai ndikusei kumberi.
(Sister, come so that I put you in front.)

The sarcasm in the tout's voice and the ambiguity in the word, *kuisa*, meaning either 'to put' or 'to engage in sexual intercourse,' provoked his colleagues to burst into laughter, suggesting that they interpreted the utterance to imply a sexual advance. Through the contextualisation cues, the woman interpreted the utterance as offensive, and responded,

4. Zimbwa remunhu. Harinyari!
(You are a big dog. Shame on you!)

It appears that parents, especially those of the WC, use the insult *imbwa* quite regularly when ridiculing or shaming their older and younger children. In this context, the insult is always serious. Scolding her daughter, Shamiso, age 22, for falling pregnant from an illicit relationship for the second time, Ellen, age 44, said,

5. Haunyari wakaita sei? Wakapata
sehuku. Imbwa chaiyo!

(Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You are as inconstant as a hen. You are a real dog!)

Ellen utters this insult in the presence of Shamiso's younger sisters and their nephew (the researcher). The simile *sehuku* (like a chicken) is "illustrative" in function (Whaler 1981: 1034) in that it helps the addressee to see clearly the intensity of her immorality, and it also allows the speaker to reinforce her disapproval of the addressee's actions. The juxtaposition of the simile and the metaphorical insult, *imbwa chaiyo* (you are a real dog) makes the affective key (Hymes 1972) of the insult heavy or traumatic, with serious or permanent consequences resulting from being shamed. As the Shona aptly capture in the proverb "*nyadzi dzinokunda kufa*" (Shame is worse than death), the shaming effect of an insult guarantees its efficacy as a social control device.

There are, however, occasions where parents or caregivers insult younger children by calling them *imbwa*, but without intending to stigmatise or hurt the child. When children reach the age of 3 or so, serious name-calling begins. This usually occurs when an adult is angered or frustrated by the actions of a child who is expected to know better. For example, Tendai, age 34, a caregiver for Peter, age 4, shouts at him for soiling his pants, "*Uri mbwa!*" (You are a dog!). This insult provokes Peter to tears. The caregiver quickly calms him and changes focus. However, interviews revealed that many parents do not approve of their children using this same abuse term on their siblings.

The terms *mbudzi* (goat) and *dhongi* (donkey) were found in some parents' insults to their young children, siblings' and friends' speech and in classroom settings. Both

terms imply lack of intelligence. When used by parents to their younger children it appears that both terms serve a social control function. For example, Sheila, age 37, told us that when she gets exasperated by her son Blessing's, (age 12), failure to solve a simple Maths problem, she calls him,

6. Uri mbudzi chaiyo iwe!
(You are a real goat!)

However, when adjacent generation siblings exchange these terms they sound provocative and often result in conflict. Close friends exchange these terms playfully to signal their bond or sometimes as serious insults. When close friends exchange serious insults the offence may be mitigated by the license they enjoy through their jocular relationship.

Some high school male teachers claimed that they call students, male or female “*uri dhongi*” (you are a donkey) or “*uri buds*” (you are a goat) as a reprimand for failing to do things that they are expected to be able to do. When performed in the presence of other students, the insulting act achieves the intended shaming effect, says one teacher. The teachers argue that with the banning of corporal punishment in Zimbabwean schools, insulting becomes an effective alternative. One ordinary level male student claimed to use *dhongi* to his close friends, adding that the use of low terms this way could imply intimacy.

The terms *katsi* and *savara* are also used in the relationships and situations cited above. Both terms imply a thing of little value, since cats serve only minor functions in the home (compared to dogs and other domesticated animals), such as catching rats

and snakes and crows are not edible, but they are simply a nuisance in people's fields, eating fresh maize cobs and nuts. While both men and women use *katsi*, it appears that *savara* occurs only in the male speech. One teacher said that he uses it to ridicule students who make a lot of noise in class yet their performance is below average. However, some students claim that they do not feel insulted by the use of *savara* since the bird from which the insult is derived is not part of their urban experience. This interpretation has implications for the importance of situated meanings⁵⁵.

In our data, the term *mbocho* appears only in the conversations of male adult friends when teasing each other. The term implies uncontrollable sexual prowess or aggressiveness. Metaphorically, when a man is called "Uri mbocho" ((You are a he-goat) it implies that he behaves in an irrational manner. Sometimes, a speaker uses this term angrily. One informant said that a friend had promised to drive him to the airport. The friend only phoned a few minutes before check-in time to say that he had no fuel enough to take him to the airport. The informant claimed that he expressed his annoyance at the friend's unreasonableness and selfishness by calling him "*mbocho*."

The term *dhadha* or its slang form *dhakisi* appears most frequently in siblings, young children and teachers' discourse. The terms entail sluggish action by fat, short-legged individuals akin to that of ducks because of their web-footed, short legs and depressed body. At an infant sports day for one primary school in Mount Pleasant some grade 2 children cheered one fat and short girl saying, "*Dhakis, dhakis!*" two young boys

⁵⁵ The concept of 'situated meanings' is central to our thesis that language derives its (social) meaning from use in specific situations. Gee (1999) gives an elaborate and succinct explanation of what 'situated meanings' entail. In brief, "situated" means "local, grounded in actual practices and experiences" (Gee, 40). Addressing and referencing is one area where it is clear that meaning is multiple, flexible, and tied to culture. Hence, like other address and reference modes, insults fall under what Eastman (1985: 6) calls "culturally-loaded vocabulary".

challenging each other for a fight on a street in Mbare, one fat and short and the other slim and tall were surrounded by cheering friends. The slim boy provoked his opponent saying,

7. Handirwi nedhadha ini. Uri Yokuzuna
iwe!
(I don't fight with a duck. You are as
fat as Yokuzuna!).

We observed an upper primary school lady teacher reprimanding a female pupil for answering a question from her chair,

8. Simuka! Uri dhadha.
(Stand up! You are a duck.)

The street provocation culminated into a fierce exchange of blows and the classroom reprimand reduced the pupil to tears.

While the cheering pupils used the term *dhadha* playfully and lightly, the angry slim boy and the female teacher used it seriously with an intention to hurt the addressees. Beside, the context of use, the cheering pupils' shift to the slang alternative indexed intimacy. Although the teacher claimed that she insulted the pupil with corrective intentions, it appeared that, as in the street case, pointing out the addressee's true weakness in the presence of a possibly, unsympathetic audience, jabs exactly "where the skin is thinnest" (Farb, 1974: 94).

The term *nguruve* appears mostly in the speech of women to their teenage daughters or relatives under their custody and only rarely, in the utterances of landladies to female lodgers or wives of lodgers in some high-density areas. In both cases speakers use the word *nguruve* as a serious and medium insult, implying shabbiness in self-upkeep and neglect in house keeping responsibilities. One female informant says that she treats her young lodger's wife "*semwana wangu*" (like her own daughter). Hence, like her own daughter, when she displays scruffy tendencies, she said,

9. Ndinomutuka kuti 'uri nguruve' kana
'chinguruve chaicho.'
(I scold her saying 'you are a pig', or 'you are
a filthy pig'.)

This kind of insult is made with didactic intentions.

9.2.2 *Names of low professions/occupations*

The names taken from low professions/occupations include *mahobho* (security guard), *hwindi* (tout), *magreen bhomba* (security guards in green uniform), *dhakabhoyi* (mortar mixing assistant), *house technician* (house maid), and *mbavha* (thief). All of them are light and they are usually used to address people who are related to holders of these occupations, such as child, girlfriend, holders of the occupations themselves, young children and siblings.

The term *mahobho* implies low class, low income person and unintelligent with very little education. The basic qualification for security guards in Zimbabwe is a Grade seven pass. Security guards are very lowly paid and most of them live in abject poverty. But, where they work as gatekeepers in public and public institutions they

tend to harass and deny people access, sometimes unreasonably. Thus, children are socialised against becoming or dating *mahobho*. We heard young children playing on the street of some high-density suburbs calling out “*Mahobho! Mahobho!*” at (a) security guard(s) in uniform cycling past. On two occasions the victim responded angrily at the children. The angry responses reflect that this insult has seriously damaging elocutionary effects.

One informant said that her 12 year-old son sustained a wound on his shoulder from a stone thrown at him by his 7 year-old sister after teasingly calling her *mukadzi wamahobho* (a security guard’s wife). Although these children enjoy a joking relationship, the sister’s misinterpretation of her brother’s contextualisation cues could have caused the rage.

The term *(ma)green bhomba* (Green bombers) can be used literally to refer to any law-enforcing agent of military person who wears a green uniform. However, when used by University of Zimbabwe students, especially during student demonstrations, it connotes the irrationality and heavy-handedness of the university security guards⁵⁶. In other words, the social meaning of the terms has no inherent connection with the colour of the guards’ uniform, but with their ominous behaviour synonymous with that of the big green dung flies from which the concept of *bhomba* (bomb) emanates.

⁵⁶ The University of Zimbabwe employs a contingent of security guards as permanent staff. Their primary role is to guard university property against theft and vandalism. With increased frequency and intensity in student demonstrations against the University Administration and the Government, and with the confinement of these demonstrations to campus, the guards assumed a secondary and controversial role of constraining the demonstrations in general and in particular, restraining students from surrounding the administration building housing the Vice Chancellor’s offices. This deteriorated into running battles between the guards and the students, with students throwing stones and hailing insults at the guards and the guards beating the students with button sticks. This ‘cat’ and ‘mouse’ relationship between students and guards resulted in bad blood between the two groups with consequent development of verbal insults.

We observed that students address the security guards as *magreen bhomba* (or GBs) vocatively in a marked manner whenever they clash or when the guards crack down on the students during demonstrations. One male student claimed that when students shout,

10. *Green bhomba! Hokoyo nemaGB ayo!*
Green bhomber dzokera kuchikoro!
(Green bombers! Beware of those
GBs! Green bomber go back to
school.)

The guards become infuriated and beat up students more violently. However, it is not uncommon to hear students using the term in their conversations to refer to the guards. This usage seems to be unmarked, hence of no pragmatic import.

The term *hwindi* (tout) commonly used in the commuter omnibus setting (see Mashiri 2003a) connotes physical rather than intellectual capacity. Literally, touts are meant to assist the conductor and driver with lifting, carrying and loading of stuff, physically protecting the driver and conductor and the daily takings from unscrupulous persons and to ‘drag’ passengers to the buses. The term *hwindi* is applied to touts by their peers, conductors and drivers and by passengers. It is also used to young boys by their peers, siblings, parents and teachers. The restriction of the term to male reference is understood within the context of gendered labour in Zimbabwe where, until recently, outdoor labour requiring physical exertion has been performed by men only.

When used among peers, the term is mutually exchanged in duelling discourse characterised by playful antagonistic teasing. The following excerpt is part of the transcription that we recorded on one bus terminus:

11. Tout 1: Masvingo siyana nemwana wavaridzi.
Unomupei **hwindi** zvake?”
(Masvingo, leave that girl alone. How do you look after a woman as a tout?)
- Tout 2: Ndozvakaite **hwindi** so-o? Imika **mahwindi** majaira *rough* ndimi munorara muchirova vakadzi magaro muchiti *idoor* rebhazi.
(Do I look like a tout to you? I do not behave like you touts who punch your wife’s butts in your sleep imagining you are banging the door of a bus to signal the driver to take off.)
- Tout 1: Ini ndiri nani ndine mukadzi handina kufanana **nemahwindi** anotopona nemahure.
(I am lucky to have a wife unlike most of you touts who depend on prostitutes for sexual satisfaction.)

The verbal banter in the above dialogue involves name-calling that includes personal details such as wife battering and illicit sexual behaviour. The touts’ relationship is one of permitted disrespect. Researchers on Afro-American verbal play (e.g. Abrahams 1972, Labov 1977) report that similar joking abuse between age-mates can be of the strongest kind. Abrahams (1972: 217) contends that “grandparents ... may be freely included in the verbal banter, as well as reference to each other’s ‘parents’ particularly ‘mothers’ ...” However, as in the case of Shona, the insults are not meant seriously and must not be taken seriously. However, in any other context this behaviour would arouse hostility (Radcliffe-Brown, 1971: 101).

We observed many altercations involving touts and passengers, especially women, when some touts hailed heavy insults at unacquainted passengers for addressing them as *hwindi*. On one occasion a woman summoned a tout to ask for information saying,

12. Iwe hwindi uya pano.
(You tout come here.)

Angered by this address, the tout replied,

13. Ndiri hwindi wamai vako? Handidi
kujairirwa nemahure.
(Am I your mother's tout? I am not in
the habit of joking with prostitutes.)

The tout's reaction is a way of hitting back at the speaker. Culturally, making reference to one's 'mother' or 'mother's vagina' constitutes a very strong insult that, traditionally, would be considered good cause for a bloody fight among adolescent and teenager men, especially. This is obviously not unique to Shona, since researchers have identified similar patterns in other African languages and cultures (e.g. Gregersen 1997: 575-80).

The tout used the strong abuse, referring to the woman addressee's 'mother' and by calling her 'a prostitute' as a way of punishing her for violating the naming conventions of which name to use in what relationship and in which social situation. Because the speaker, a stranger, used the name *hwindi* in public it sounded highly derogatory, implying lower class and non-skilled status. Besides, touts feel annoyed when addressed thus, perhaps because even if they are attached to the role they perform regularly, they may not be committed to it. They play the role with some kind

of detachment, shame and resentment. Besides, Shona men consider an insult by a woman more hurtful than that by a man since patriarchal culture subordinates women to men and regards women as less powerful and aggressive than men.

The abuse that the tout uttered could either silence the woman forthwith or provoke her into a fight. In this case (which appears normal), the woman chose the former since in Zimbabwe, as in other African societies, one of the virtues of ideal womanhood is abstinence from verbal contests or physical brawl with men within the public domain. In some African societies, unlike Zimbabwe, as Yankah (1998: 17) observes, women wear various types of lip plates, not only as decoration, but also as instruments of speech inhibition in certain situations.

The term *dhakabhoyi* is insulting when it one uses it to refer to a bricklayer's assistant (one who prepares a mortar and cement mix) or to call a woman who is dating or is married to him or his children. The term implies a lower class and unskilled status. One young woman claimed that a man who attempted to woo her assaulted her after she told him that

14. Handinyengwi nadhakabhoyi ini.
(I will not date a mortar-cement mixer.)

We observed a fight between two young women ensue after one said to the other,

15. Uri mukadzi wadhakabhoyi,
dhakabhoyi zvake!
(You are just a wife of a mortar-cement mixer, just a mere mortar-cement mixer!)

Obviously, the two addressees cited here felt insulted since the social meanings the term *dhakabhoyi* insinuated are debasing. Since insults are etiquette violators, they may provoke an immediate response from the addressee.

The term **house technician** is a positive euphemism of *musikana wemumba* (housemaid). A euphemism is a polite or inoffensive word or expression that one uses in place of that which is harsh or offensive (Adler 1978: 66). The term *musikana wemumba* appears rather rude since it connotes belonging to a lower economic and social status. A positive euphemism therefore, bolsters the referent's image. The term **domestic technician** is often used by men to housemaids, to wives by their husbands or lovers or children by parents. Tabeth, age 36, ridicules her adolescent daughter for neglecting her school work saying,

16. Muchapedzisira mava madomestic
technician.
(You will end up working as a
housemaid.)

Although the speaker intends to soften the painful truth by using a euphemism, it appears that since the euphemistic job title violates Grice's (1975) maxim of truthfulness, it actually exacerbates the insult. The violation of the maxim of truthfulness may lead the hearer to an interpretation, which compares the implied status with the literal status. This interpretation determines the elocutionary effect of the insult and the hearer's reaction.

9.2.3 *Physical defects*

The abuse terms that have been taken from words for physical defects include *bofu* (blind person), *chirema* (deformed person), *matsi* (deaf person), *chimumu/mbeveve* (dumb person), and *chiboshwe* (left-handedness). All these terms are medium insults and are very common. Parents, relatives or caregivers and sometimes, older siblings use *bofu*, *chirema*, *matsi* and *chimumu/mbeveve*, to younger children and teachers to students to imply varied forms of inadequacies.

Several informants of all classes claimed that *bofu* is used to strangers who bump into them in the street or who don't look before crossing the street. We observed that some motorists shout insults at pedestrians crossing the street or other motorists inconveniencing them by flouting road rules. On these occasions, the term *bofu* is often used in rhetorical questions with a second person singular subject morpheme, in bold, (e.g. “**Uri** *bofu* *here iwe?*” Are you blind?). Mashiri (2000b: 184) makes the same observation about the use of insult in parent-child and teacher-student interaction, “rhetorical questions consisting of words that refer to forms of disabilities are usually used to ridicule or scorn and prompt children by parents, or students by teachers.” The second person morpheme used in the question such as one cited above marks disrespect and is meant to embarrass the victim into conformity. Teachers and parents use varied versions of this same rhetorical question to teasingly or seriously insult young children or students who make glaring errors in varied activities.

A number of lower secondary students, both male and female, claimed that their teachers, male and female, use *matsi* (deafness) to insult students who do not catch something the first time. Several parents of all classes expressed distaste for sleepy

children who are in the habit of calling back, “*Matii?*” (I beg your pardon.) to prompts for instruction.

While interlocutors may use *bofu* and *matsi* both in playful and serious insults, it seems that *chirema* is used in serious insults only. It appears that WC parents use this *chirema* more frequently than MC parents. The term *chirema* denotes both physical and mental defects. Thus, the social meanings implied by its use as an insult include ignorance, disregard for basic or important rules, failing in rudimentary tasks and roles, etc. When the researcher visited a relative to conduct an interview for this thesis, the relative’s son, age 7, took no notice of our arrival and continued watching television. Seemingly embarrassed by the child’s behaviour, the mother (our relative) angrily prompted the child:

17. Tari, haugoni kukwazisa babamudiki
 here? Uri chirema!
 (Tari can’t you greet uncle? You are
 rude!)

A child, age 5, wets her pants to which the exasperated caregiver reacted,

18. Uri zirema remunhu. Haugoni kutaure
 kuti ndinoda kuenda kutoilet here?
 (You are very stupid. Why didn’t you
 let me know that you want to go to the
 toilet?)

The shift from *chirema* to *zirema* signals greater intensity of abuse. These two examples show how adults use insults either for eliciting appropriate and/or polite responses from children or reprimand them for failing to live up to certain expected standards.

Some high school teachers claimed that they use the term *chimumumu* or *mbeveve* as a label or in a rhetorical question to encourage some withdrawn and shy students to contribute in class. Some parents or relatives with institutionalised advisory roles may also use these abuse terms to tease adult children or relatives who resort to silence in conflict ridden marriage relationships. The terms *chimumumu* and *mbeveve* insinuate inherent passiveness and reclusiveness, which are as undesirable as speech impairment itself, contrary to “strategic silence” (Yankah 1998: 18) “constitutive of a speech act” (Saville-Troike 1985: 6). While speech impairment is unwanted, strategic silence is encouraged in certain situations since,

In certain situations, silence may constitute a strategic expression of indifference by an adult, implying that it is not every situation that requires verbal intervention. Not to react in certain situations, may only be a discretionary exercise in restraint, which in itself is a mark of maturity (Yankah, 1998: 19).

While speakers use the terms denoting disability or impairment to insult others, when promoting strategic silence they may use proverbial expressions, such as “*rurimi inyoka*” (unrestrained speech is destructive).

The term *chiboshwe* has high frequency of occurrence among WC speakers. Its usage occurs mainly among mothers to their young children. A parent can use this term vocatively, as in, (“*Iwe chiboshwe!*” (Hey you the left-handed one!)), when insulting a child who uses his/her left hand to greet people, to receive gifts and for eating or writing. Although left-handedness was accepted throughout the world in the 1980s as simply a difference rather than a form of disability, some (right-handed) parents still

sincerely worry about their children's left hand use. Many folk-theories about left-handedness exist, thus lefties are often singled out for teasing or stereotyping.

9.2.4 *Mental defects*

The terms taken from words for mental defects include *benzi* (mad person), *rema* (stupid person), *sichupeti* (stupid), and *sasikamu* (stupid). Of these, the most common are *benzi*, which is a very light term, and three of the words for 'stupid': *rema*, *sichupeti* and *sasikamu*. The first two are light, while *sasikamu* is medium.

The possible reason is that *sasikamu* is derived from the acronym SASCAM, for 'Salisbury Society for the Care of the African Mentally Handicapped'. At independence, the Society was renamed ZIMCARE Trust, a less obviously prejudicing term. But, the institutionalisation of mentally retarded children alone (in spite of its many merits) intensifies the insulting value of the term *sasikamu*.

Intimates exchange the term *benzi* or its variant forms, *kapenzi* (a little mad person), *chipenzi* (a little mad person) and *zibenzi* (a big mad person), either playfully or seriously. Parents may use these terms in the same way to their children and teachers to children. The noun prefixes *ka-*, *chi-* and *zi-* in *kapenzi*, *chipenzi* and *zibenzi*, respectively, imply a worse condition than that suggested by the term *benzi* (see, Fortune 1955: 54, Mashiri 20003: 5-6). A woman seriously calls her drunk boyfriend "*Uri chipenzi*" (You are mad) after he tries to kiss her in public at a wedding party; a mother calls her adult daughter "*Uri benzi*" (You are crazy) when she turned up for a family funeral in a mini skirt, and a female friend jokingly calls the researcher "*Uri zibenzi*" (You are mad) when the latter could not recall his son's date of birth. The

terms *benzi* indexes some form of deviance from the expected norm. Hence, it appears that whether the speaker uses this term playfully or seriously, there is always an element of social control involved in the usage.

In the last section we described the use of the term *rema* in the context of physical defects. When used as a word that refers to a mental defect, like *sichupeti*, it signifies dullness or submissiveness. Parents can use it to their children, older siblings to younger siblings, peers to their fellow peers and teachers to students. There are a few cases where spouses use it in conflict discourse.

All the occasions where *rema* and *sichupeti* are used in the data for this study involve seriousness. Some primary school teachers claimed that they call a pupil *rema* or *sichupeti* when irritated by his/her inability to do basic things such as copying things correctly from the chalkboard. More mothers than fathers of all classes, maintained that they use these terms to insult their young children in their home environment only, when they act below the expected intellectual level, for example, a child failing to wipe dirty off after using the toilet, forgetting to claim the correct change from a tuck shop assistant.

When used between spouses, *rema* or *sichupeti* usually lead to strained relations. In asymmetrical relationships such as mother-child, teacher-pupil, the reaction these terms provoke in the recipients range from maximum psychological damage to minimum damage, with withdrawal and apprehension on the maximum end of the scale and embarrassment and frustration, on the minimum end. However, it appears

that *sichpeti* is used more often than *rema*, and in some contexts, because of overuse, it has lost its pragmatic efficacy.

The term *sasikamu* occurs in intimates' speech, women's speech to unacquainted men who provoke them in sexual advances and parents can use it to their young children. On the whole, it appears that women use this term more than their male counterparts. But, it is not clear why this should be so. The term implies unreasonableness, and lack of restraint.

A woman walking with her husband calls him *sasikamu* when he stops to urinate besides a footpath that leads to a local bar; a girl in school uniform calls an older unacquainted motorist inviting her for a ride, *sasikamu*, to which he responded *kahure* (small prostitute) and drove off; a mother calls her adult child *sasikamu*, for battering his pregnant wife. Some girls claimed that some unacquainted WC boys assaulted them for calling them *masakikamu*. This reaction reveals that insults diminish or demean their targets. Therefore, the popular rhyme 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me' cannot be entirely true.

9.2.5 Moral defects

The abuse terms taken from words implying some moral defect include *nzenza* (a person of loose morals), *jengavarume* (a girls fond of hanging around with boys), *jengavakadzi* (a boy fond of hanging around with women), *chapungu* (stingy), *Jaya mupfumi* (stingy), *boorangoma* (unrefined, impolite), *satani* (devil, vile, cruel), *gwara* (coward), and *street-kid* (dirty).

The term *nzenza* occurred mainly in the speech of older people of all classes to address mostly women, giving it the feature [+ female]. It implies loose morals and most female informants claimed that they use it to insult adolescent and teenage girls and young women whose morals are questionable. One woman said that she calls her daughter “Uri *nzenza*” (You are a slut), when she spends time hanging around with boys on the street corners, another woman calls her married niece ‘*nzenza*’ for wearing tight jeans in the presence of her in-laws. The term *nzenza* is usually used moralistically to constrain the behaviour of women. In Shona society, like many other societies in the world, women are socialized to dress, sit, and speak ‘like a woman’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 324).

Free socialisation between girls and boys is encouraged since through this interaction “boys and girls learn the basic fact of life in their society, namely that life is heterosexual. It prepares them for marriage” (Chiwome 1996: 52). But, a girl may not leave the company of other girls in order to play with boys. A girl who does so is derogatorily labelled *jengavarume*. People use this abuse term to address such a girl to restrain her behaviour, since society fears that such a girl may grow up to become promiscuous and disgrace her family. Similarly, a boy who abandons other boys to hang around with women is chided as *jengavakadzi*. Some high school students, however, claimed that, in addition to using these terms, they also use nicknames to insult such ‘deviant’ individuals; a girl is given a boy’s name and a boy, a girl’s name.

The term *chapungu* occurred in the speech of people complaining about the stinginess of a person, male or female, who is expected to be generous with money. Children may refer to an absent parent as *chapungu* to express their unhappiness with his/her

stinginess. In this case, the term is light, but used seriously. Women who have a joking relationship with a man, as his sisters-in-law, nieces, etc, may playfully tease him as *chapungu* to nag him into offering them money for niceties. Some parents reported that they use the term *chapungu* to chide their working children who are mean to encourage them to be generous.

While *jayamupfumi* has the same social meanings as *chapungu*, it occurred mainly in the speech of young people with some Christian background. Denotatively, it refers to the rich young man referred to in Mark 10: 17-24. Thus, the term seems to maintain the syntactic feature [+ male]. A group of Anglican youths used it to tease a young man working as an accountant but was popular for not contributing any money to some church projects and one woman said that her children covertly refer to their father as *jayamupfumi* for stopping going to church in protest of tithing.

The terms *boorangoma* (one who snaps the drum) occurs quite frequently among WC men, particularly young men who have contact with street culture. It signals unrefined, bad-mannered or violent behaviour. Literally, a person who plays the drum in an entertaining way is deemed a good player, but one who snaps it (*kuboora*) is considered a bad drummer who disrupts an orderly performance. Therefore, metaphorically, a person who causes anarchy, stress, or shame is often referred to as *boorangoma*.

It is not uncommon to hear a group of male street vendors or touts playfully insulting a rude colleague saying, “*Uri boorangoma iwe*” (You are a uncouth person), or young boys involved in verbal jousting on the street calling each other *boorangoma* or

mwana weboorangoma (son of an unrefined man). We observed a few occasions where some men refer to themselves as *boorangoma* (e.g. *Usatambe neni ndiri boorangoma ini!* ‘Don’t mess up with me, I am violent’) as a way of threatening their opponent or women who insult them for making sexual advances. Some WC young women claimed that they sometimes use the term *boorangoma* as a serious insult to men who make unwelcome or offensive sexual advances, only in situations where they feel protected from possible attack by the addressee.

The term *satani*, literally devil, is one of the most frequently occurring terms among the WC, both men and women. Parents may use it to their young children or spouses, children can use them to their siblings or peers and older people may use them in a serious way to neighbours, relatives or strangers. It implies veil, ill-mannered or evil behaviour. Many parents scold their young children quite often calling them *satani* such that the insult has lost its abusive efficiency. Some Christian parents claimed that they tease their Sunday school going children as *mwana wasatani* (child of the devil) for refusing to share food with other children, disobeying parents or older siblings, or beating up other children, activities Sunday school teachers say are influenced by the devil. This insult reduced some children to tears, but it invariably results in attitude change.

In our data, many parents of all classes use the term *gwara* (coward) to their younger sons, older siblings to their younger brothers, women to their spouses or lovers and male friends. There are very few instances where women use it to insult their friends. For example, one woman said that she addressed her friend as *gwara* for not confronting a woman who dated her husband. Many mothers claimed that they

address their younger sons as *gwara* when they report that their peers beat them at school or during play. Young men may tease a peer for lacking courage to ask women for a date. The insult is meant to shame and diminish the boy child or young man. In other words, the psychological damage inflicted by the insult should transform the effeminate boy or young man into an aggressive, active, and dominating person in line with social stereotypes. Besides physical aggression, Shona society, like many other societies, socialise men to be verbally aggressive and to use highly intense language in persuasive attempts (Burgoon and Stewart 1975 and Burgoon, Dillard and Doran 1983).

The term *street-kid* connotes dirtiness and it occurs in the speech of mothers of all classes, siblings and teachers. The most plausible explanation for its non-use by fathers is that in Shona society women are generally responsible for child-care and early socialisation. They inculcate sanitary and hygienic values into the children, a role that teachers often complement. Gelfand (1979) notes that Shona mothers consistently teach children personal cleanliness (*kushambidzika*), and “by the age of four the child should have learnt the use of the right hand, the use of good language, clapping hands and cleanliness” (10). Because street children have no mothers to insist on these manners, they obviously appear filthy. The image of this dirt appearance, shared by both the speaker and addressee ensures the effectiveness of the insult *stree- kid*.

9.2.6 *Proper names*

In the introduction to this chapter we made a distinction between names that interlocutors use as nicknames and those that they use as abuse resources. Speakers

adopt proper names that they use as insults in particular situations (and perhaps never repeated) from names of (un)popular political figures, and biblical characters. All these abuse terms seem to occur most frequently in the speech of young children, adolescents and teenagers, in the family, their playgroups, and in school playgrounds.

The names derived from political figures are *Mahofa*, *Chikowore*, *Chinotimba*, and *Jonathan Moyo (Jona)*. Mahofa represents fatness, ugliness and shamelessness, Chikowore, ugliness, Chinotimba, bullying and aggressive tendencies and Jona, trickster. Since Mahofa is female, the name is used to insult girls, either by other girls or boys. Similarly, the other three names for males are used to insult boys. We noted, from observations, that girls seem to feel more offended when addressed by boys than by other girls and vice versa. Since the name bearers associated with insultees are known for bad attributes and personalities, the naming exercise is retributive. Usually young children teased by siblings react by crying, refusing to respond or refusing to eat, but might eventually change their behaviour.

Some lower secondary school students told us that, sometimes these insults are directed at people dating the referents. For example, a girl dating a bully may be addressed as “*Mrs Chinoz*” (Chinotimba’s girlfriend), and a boy dating a fat, ugly girl may be addressed as ‘*Hofaz*’ (Mahofa’s boyfriend). The shift from conventional names to slang has pragmatic significance. As Allen (1983: 15)) suggests, slang is particularly serviceable as a vocabulary of abuse. In this case, the choice of slang connotes mockery and cacophony. But, whether the name-calling exercise is meant seriously or not, to arouse hostility or express friendliness, depends on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee and the situation.

Children who go to church sometimes use names derived from biblical characters to tease each other. We observed Esther, age 6, angrily call her brother, Tapiwa, age 9, *Judas* (Judas Iscariot) for betraying her trust by telling their mother that she had watched an adult television channel.

9.2.7 *Labels for despised (ethnic) identity*

The terms of abuse taken from words for despised (ethnic) identity are *mubhurandaya* (a person from Blantyre), *munyasarandi* (a person from Nyasaland), *mubwidi* (immigrant), *muchawa* (Chewa speaker) and *mukadzi wemubhurandaya* (wife of a person from Blantyre), *bhonirukisheni* (born in the location), and *mukaradhi* (coloured). The use of these terms to address or refer to Shona speakers constitutes ‘address inversion’, that is, the use of abuse terms originally meant for out-group members, for self-reference. This strategy intensifies the elocutionary effect of the abuse terms.

The names *mubhurandaya*, *munyasarandi*, *mubwidi*, *muchawa* and *mukadzi wemubhurandaya* are derogatory labels Shona speakers use (d) for migrants from Malawi since the twentieth century. Tseuneo Yoshikune’s (1989) study on the “inner Harare” in the first half of the twentieth century describes the evolution of a community of “northern” migrants from present-day Malawi. Mashiri (2004) explores the complex, interwoven relationships between these migrants and the Shona speaking people. Mashiri’s study reveals that there has been a long history of subtle antagonism and shifting affiliations between these communities.

In spite of shifting affiliations, the Shona still regard Malawian immigrants and succeeding generations who were born in Zimbabwe as outsiders whose culture poses a threat to Shona culture. Unlike, the Shona, most migrants from Malawi were (are) matrilineal. Thus, the men were (are) generally perceived as effeminate men. They were despised for being permanent urban dwellers, a phenomenon associated with cultural alienation among the Shona. Therefore, any Shona speakers who displayed behaviour akin to that attributed to the migrants or those that acted as ‘renegades’ (Khleif (1979: 162) were treated the same as outsiders.

Shona speakers use the terms *mubhurandaya* (a person from Blantyre), *munyasarandi* (a person from Nyasaland), and *mubwidi* (immigrant), to insult men. All these terms signal lack of knowledge of or disregard for Shona traditional values or customs. We observed a traditional marriage proceeding where the ‘fathers’ tasked the bride’s elder brother (our friend) to lead bride wealth payment proceedings. When our friend professed ignorance, his uncle teased him thus,

19. Saka uri bhurandayaka?
(It seems that you have become an immigrant.)

The uncle quickly reassured the seemingly embarrassed young man. Some city young men who have admitted lack of knowledge to skin an animal have reported being labelled *bwidi* or *munyasarandi* by older male members of the family.

The term *muchawa* (a Chewa speaker) may be used to men or women to imply an aversion to dogs, since Shona speakers generally believe that Chewa speaking people

dread dogs. One woman seriously insulted her child saying “*Uri muchawa chaiye.*” (You are a typical Chewa) when he almost fell running away from a neighbour’s dog.

Some men use the term *mukadzi webhurandaya* to insult their domineering wives, since the matrilineal system, dominant among Chewa speakers is associated with female dominance. Other men claimed that they insult their wives as *mukadzi webhurandaya* for refusing to stay at their rural home working on the land and keeping animals⁵⁷.

The term *bhonirukisheni* (born in the location) occurs mainly in the speech of WC and occasionally MC speakers. Parents can use this term to their children, adult friends and peers can exchange it playfully and acquaintances or strangers can use it provocatively. Literally, the word *bhonirukisheni* implies one without a rural home or clan connections, but connotatively, it signifies stupidity and ignorance (mainly of basic traditional values and customs). One man claimed that he calls his older son *bhoni* when he displays ignorance of rudimentary customary procedures as a way of prompting him to show more interest in cultural issues. Many MC men and women without rural homes said that they often exchange the term jokingly with friends, but they feel offended when labelled thus by relatives or strangers. When used by strangers, or relatives in an antagonistic mood, this term can generate a quarrel or

⁵⁷ Ranger (1989) and Schmidt (1992) claim that in the 1950s and 60s, men of Malawi origin were popular with Shona women who ran away from the growing demands of intensified labour, intolerable domestic situations, such as harassment from their husbands’ folks or their own parents, polygamy, divorce and childlessness. The memories of this renegade behaviour, embedded with ethnocentrism motivate some men to create metaphors or ‘Malawiness’ used for reinforcing traditional patriarchy and in-group attachment. Ranger (1989) and Schmidt (1992) claim that in the 1950s and 60s, men of Malawi origin were popular with Shona women who ran away from the growing demands of intensified labour, intolerable domestic situations, such as harassment from their husbands’ folks or their own parents, polygamy, divorce and childlessness. The memories of this renegade behaviour, embedded with ethnocentrism motivate some men to create metaphors or ‘Malawiness’ used for reinforcing traditional patriarchy and in-group attachment.

violence. In fact, compared with the migrant derived insults, *bhonirukisheni*, appears to be more ‘powerful.’

Speakers of all classes, both male and female may use the term *mukaradhi*, with young people using its slang variant *mukedha*, to older children, spouses, relatives and friends. *Mukaradhi* is the Shonalised version of the English term ‘coloured,’ used to describe the offspring of White/Black sexual unions in Zimbabwe as well as in the US. Over the years, *mukaradhi* has been used as a racial insult. When used to refer to members of the coloured community, the term implies illegitimacy, pseudo-White/Black, and dishonesty and when used to insult Shona speakers the term signals ignorance or disregard of cultural values and customs. We observed one woman ridiculing her daughters for smoking, drinking alcohol saying,

20. Kana mava makaradhi mobva pano
pamba pangu!
(If you behave like coloureds I suggest
you move out of my house.)

A university female student claimed that her father insulted her as *mukaradhi* for inviting her boyfriend home for dinner before formally introducing him to her family. While friends may use the term jokingly, parents and relatives tend to use it to their older children didactically.

9.2.8 *Terms based on language and social attitudes*

Abuse terms indexing language and social attitudes are created from patterns of behaviour or through semantic extensions. The terms that occur in the data are *munozibrigade* (one who speaks through the nose), *musalad* or *musalala* (salad), *SRB* (strong

rural background), *mubhoyi* (a servant), and *muZezuru*⁵⁸ (a Zezuru speaker). When these terms are used to refer to an entire class of individuals who share certain linguistic and social attitudes, they take the plural forms *manozvi*, *masalad*, *maSRB*, *mabhoyi* and *maZezuru*, respectively. The plural affix *ma-* (class 6) marks derogation.

Usage of these terms is most frequent among the young people, particularly in situations where they live as a community constituting subcultures. We used the University of Zimbabwe as an ideal community where young people of varied backgrounds and tastes interact frequently. In this community students tend to naturally divide themselves into two major groups: those who attended private and / or quasi-private (multiracial) schools and those that attended mission or government boarding and government day schools.

The types of schools automatically discriminate the students by class. Private and quasi-private schools normally charge exorbitant fees, which only whites, diplomats, politicians and executives can afford. These schools employ mainly white teachers and teach African languages only as second or third languages. The mixed student environment, the teacher profile and curriculum determine students' language and social attitudes. Children from peasant families and the WC families attend mission

⁵⁸ Zezuru is an arbitrary label for one of the principal dialects of ChiShona (Beach 1994: 31) widely spoken in the central part of Zimbabwe, including Harare. In his exercise of harmonising the Shona dialects, Doke (1931) selected the Zezuru version spoken in Harare [Zezuru-ChiHarare] (Chimhundu 1993: 39) as the norm for developing 'standard' written Shona. As Chimhundu reminds us, the 'standard' language was widely promoted, largely informally, as medium for radio, newspaper and television, commercial advertisements, public speeches and performing arts. Following Sapir's (1949e) argument on the relationship between language, thought and culture, we assume that the widespread popularisation of 'Zezuru-ChiHarare' made it a tool for transforming and constituting conceptual thought and culture. Because, culture is often naively perceived as essentially traditional, calling someone *muZezuru* implies a rigid loyalty to the so-called 'standard' or traditional behavioural patterns, values, and attitudes. The efficacy of the address term *muZezuru* therefore, comes from the parochial view of culture as 'standard' or traditional and from the naivety and futility of enforcing a Zezuru hegemony through language standardisation.

and government schools with generally low fees. These schools employ mainly government trained Black teachers and follow the government stipulated curriculum with African languages as compulsory subjects. The learning environment also has some influence on students' language and social attitudes.

The terms *munozu* and *musalad/musalala* have the same social meanings. The word *munozu*, from the English noun 'nose' suggests the use of metonymy. According to Bonvillian (1993: 75) metonymy refers to a type of semantic transfer whereby one entity is taken to stand for another on the basis of some contextual relationships. The nose, in this case represents the whole body in the sense of how a person carries him/herself. Calling a person *munozu* signifies, narrowly speaking English or Shona with a nasalised accent or attempting to speak like a British English native speaker and broadly, it implies anglicised or westernised behaviour.

Musalad comes from the word 'salad' and it expresses members of the subculture, particularly the women's preference for salads to *sadza*. While salads are perceived as a western dish that provides roughage to health-conscious women who maintain slim bodies, *sadza*, the staple food of Zimbabwe symbolises authentic African identity. Thus, preference for salads to *sadza* implies cultural menticide. Some more conservative students view the word *SALAD* as an abbreviation standing for the abuse 'Silly Africans like American Dressing'. Conservative male students use this insult more frequently as they say that the mini skirts and tight pants '*masalad*' girls put on abhor them. Interviews with some '*masalad*' revealed that they find reference to dress more scathing than reference to food since it indexes stupidity and superficiality.

The other distinctive features for students labelled as *manози* or *masalad* are poor proficiency in African indigenous languages, clubbing, interest in elite sport such as cricket, tennis, basketball, western clothing styles and music tastes and western sense of beauty, etc. Women wear heavy make-up, tight pants and try to keep up with Hollywood celebrity styles and the men wear expensive shoes and pants and American celebrity fashion such as wearing earrings.

With regards academic programmes, students perceived as *manози* or *masalad* tend to choose Law, Psychology, modern languages such as French and Portuguese. A separate study could establish the reasons for these choices. Gaidzanwa (no date) observes that ‘nose brigades,’ both male and female normally do not participate in student struggles against the University Administration or the Government. Very few are politically visible and audible, except in human rights activism.

Some conservative male students provoke ‘*masalad*’ girls by greeting them as “*Hesi musalala*’ (Hello salad girl.). The addressee either remains silent, or answers back, “*Hesi muSRB*” (Hello native boy). Sometimes a group of boys talk to each other loudly enough for a girl who is passing by to hear. We recorded the following from the Swinton Hostel green:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| 21. | Male student 1: | Ndakanzwa kuti wava nemunozzi wako mazuva ano?
(I hear that you are dating a ‘nose brigade’ these days?) |
| | Male student 2: | Nani? Ndiri <i>new farmer</i> shamwari. Munozzi ndingamudii?
(By whom? I am a new farmer my friend. What good is a ‘nose brigade’ at a farm?) |
| | Male student 3: | Wakamboona sendekera yemanozi here paTV? |

(Did you see how ‘nose brigade’ girls dance to the jingle sendekera on television.)

Male student 1: Haagoni kongonya shamwari! (Loud laughter)
 (‘Nose brigade’ girls cannot dance shaking their buttocks.)

The male students framed a conversation to strategically attack the passer-by and anyone else belonging to that class who was close enough to overhear the conversation. This face saving strategy is not uncommon although it is not possible to tell the reasons for shifting from the more common direct confrontational approach. We observed that conservative female students tend to use the indirect approach than the male students.

One common method of insulting ‘nose brigades’ is using a pseudo-addressee that is, addressing other conservative students as *manози* in the presence of ‘nose brigades’. During some student demonstration in 2002 one student leader shouted at his classmates attempting to evade confrontation with the police,

22. Heyi manozi dzokai. Muri vatengesi!
 (Hey, nose brigades come back. You are sell-outs.)

Manози in this case is not literal. It connotes cowardice and discord. The insult is expected to shame the hearers into loyalty although the primary targets are ‘nose brigades’ since they are known for scoffing the militant approach to student activism.

Related to this addressing strategy is the playful abuse that conservatives perform among themselves, calling an in-group member *munози*, or *musalad*. It is common to hear students teasing their friends who are allocated subjects that they did not do at

“A” level such as French and Portuguese, saying “*Wava musalala shamwari*.” The addressee may respond by imitating the ‘nose brigade’ speech style or walking style as a way of acknowledging the joke and insulting any ‘nose brigade’ who may be eavesdropping or passing by.

‘Nose brigades’ insult conservatives by calling them *mabhoyi*, *maSRB* or *maZezuru*. These terms imply unpolished manners and speech style and conservative values. Linguistically, those with a ‘strong rural background’ speak broken English, break the rules of speech or speak English embellished with their dialectal speech forms. Socially, the men are perceived as chauvinistic, sexist and impolite. At the University of Zimbabwe we did not observe any occasion where ‘nose brigades’ insult conservatives directly using these terms. Many girls claimed that ‘SRBs’ are violent and ‘barbaric,’ “they will embarrass you, even by assaulting you” said one girl. Therefore, the indirect method is also useful in this case, especially because the ‘nose brigades’ are in the minority and have fewer sympathisers since the general rhetoric in the institution, as in the nation at large, is in praise of cultural nationalism.

It is important to note that because of this cultural nationalist rhetoric, other people besides students also use the insults *munozu* and *musalad* frequently. Parents, particularly those in the WC, can use them to their younger and adolescent children and strangers can use it to unacquainted people in service encounters. Many parents claimed that they use these terms to reprimand children for “behaving like white children.” Statements like,

23. Handidi manozi pamba pangu. Kana
uri musalad unoitira chisalad chako

kuchikoro kwenyu uko kwete mumba mangu.

(I don't tolerate nose brigades in my house. If you are a "salad" you practice that culture in school not in my house. This name-calling exercise serves a social control function.)

9.3 Heavy insults

The heavy insults or terms of abuse that appeared in the data include *hure* (prostitute), *mwana wehure* (child of a prostitute), *muroyi* (witch), *ngochani* (homosexual) and its variant forms, *mukadzi* (woman), *mhata* (ass), *dhodhi/duzvi/shiti* (human excrement), and *musatanyoko* (mother fucker).

Ranked in terms of their heaviness, *hure*, *mwana wehure*, *mukadzi* and *muroyi* carry a less powerful emotional and psychological charge, since some parents can use them to insult children in the family. The rest that refer to sexual identity, body parts and excretions constitute antisocially strong speech. The use of these terms indicates disregard for social taboos. As a result use of such terms has been associated with dominance and masculinity in Western culture (de Klerk 1991: 157). We call these words 'strong' because their use implies an act of daring and the violation of rules of *nyadzi* (bashfulness) and *rukudzo* (respect/politeness), referred to in Chapter 7.

Heavy insults are "fighting words" (Parkinson 1985: 211) for all classes of speakers, although MC or upper class speakers almost never use some of them. Some MC and upper class speakers refuse even to pronounce some of them. We shall divide heavy abuse terms into expletives and non-expletives. Although cultures may vary widely in the terms, which serve as expletives, "their choice of focus is typically sex and

excretion (considered taboos by most societies) and anything that has a sacred place in the belief system of a community” (de Klerk, 1991: 157).

9.3.1 *Expletives*

The terms that fall under this category are *ngochani* and its variant forms, *mhata*, *duzvi* and its variants, and *musatanyoko*. These appear mainly in male speech although there are many instances where they appear in women’s speech as well. Male friends of various age groups use them jokingly in their male networks although those in street subcultures such as touts, vendors and street children can use the terms playfully in public or can use them to insult strangers. We observed that when MC adult male friends exchange these terms they do it very covertly mainly at drinking hideouts, far from avoidance relationships.

The use of the term *ngochani* to friends and non-friends occurred most frequently in the data from the University of Zimbabwe students. Two reasons are attributable to this: the conviction of the late former President of Zimbabwe, Canaan Sodindo Banana of sodomy in 2000 and his attachment to the male student community as a soccer patron and the predominance of a stereotype that associates ‘nose brigade’ culture with homosexuality.

The term *ngochani* has six variant forms, Sodindo (Banana’s middle name), *Banana*, *Mudhara Bans*, *Sodomiser*, *Ngochie*, and *Sodom* (from the Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah). These terms are used in light-hearted humour between male friends or used by females to their male friends or boyfriends as address terms. We observed that female students use only *Banana* and *Ngochie* to their male friends and

boyfriends. Some female students claimed that the surface function of the address is play, but the underlying function is to deal with their anxiety of the possibility of homosexual habits in their close friends or boyfriends and to covertly discourage their boyfriends from falling victim of Banana.

Some male students said that they used these terms to jokingly address their soccer loving friends as an indirect way of warning them of the danger Canaan Banana posed to their masculinity. This claim seems plausible since four out of the six variants of *ngochani* (*Sodindo*, *Banana*, *Mudhara Bans* and *Sodomiser*) make overt or covert reference to Canaan Banana. Christian students used the term *Sodom* more frequently but clandestinely as a reference term to refer to male or female students who were rumoured to be homosexual. Of all the seven terms referring to homosexuality, *Sodom* is the most implicit as it takes the form of a metaphor. It implies the Christian students' abhorrence of the practice akin of the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah. But, the implicitness of the term and the covert usage seem to show the Christian students' avoidance of 'dirty' language.

Sometimes male students use these terms to address their friends who are obviously not homosexuals in the presence of other students suspected to be. The speaker vocatively calls out the word facing the pseudo addressee but providing meta-communicative cues that suggest the actual addressee. When used this way, an insult is meant to hurt heterosexual males who fail or refuse to live up to society's idea of masculinity and enforces the norms of male sex-role behaviour. In Shona society, as in many other societies, for men to have sex with women is ok, but sex with men reduces men to the level of women (and therefore subject to insult).

We observed the common use of the terms *mhata*, *dunzvi* and *musatanyoko* on the street by WC children, sometimes as young as 4 years, vendors and touts to their peers and strangers. We recorded many occasions on the streets of Mbare, Dzivarasekwa, and Mabvuku involving young children shouting at their peers using “*Uri mhata*” (You are an ass), “*Shiti yemunhu*” (You are shit), “*Musatanyoko*” (mother-fucker).

Since most families place social sanctions against use of these terms, many children use them away from their street or neighbourhood. Adults normally shout at such children saying something like, “*Iwe, haunyari here?*” (You, are you not ashamed?) or “*Iwe, uri mwana wokwaani?*” (You, whose child are you?) or they simply take no notice.

It is not uncommon to hear WC street children and touts insult a stranger for any slightest provocation using these “dirty” words. One street-boy claimed that the reason for insulting a stranger using such terms is

24. Kumunyadzisa. Anenge achida
kuzviita bigaz.
(We do it to embarrass him/her
because he/she will be acting
important.)

The embarrassment results from the jolting effect of obscenity in public places. Since mainstream society views street culture and street people contemptuously, the street people violate social taboos to signal their contempt for the standards that society

upholds. As Farbs (1974: 95) says, such speakers often regard civil speech, as the behaviour of those who uphold the status quo, whereas talking ‘dirty’ is a symbol of ‘honest’ rebellion against the existing power structure. Besides, the social structures and institutions that censor “unruly” verbal behaviour are absent from the street. The streets have different rules and rituals than those of family life. Here life is essentially free from adults and is one in which rules and rituals evolve from peers.

Sometimes ‘dirty’ words are shouted to lone young WC women walking on the street who refuse to respond to sexual advances. Our data shows that some women insult other women using these terms. We observed some WC women calling each other names over love triangles on the street or in the market. Common insults used on such occasions are “*Musatanyoko*” (mother-fucker), “*Shiti yemunhu*” (you are a shit) and “*Zihure*” (you are a big prostitute.). Many middle class women we spoke to identified this usage as “*mutauro wemadzimai emusika emurukisheni*” (the speech of market women who live in the poorer areas of the city). Although these opinions or beliefs may be stereotypical, they dovetail with our own observations of street culture as defined in Chapter 8.

We noted the use of ‘dirty’ insults in some WC families by parents, especially older mothers to their younger children. In many instances the utterances were recorded in the same locations where we heard children using the same terms to other children on the street.

9.3.2 *Non-expletives*

Many Shona speakers consider the terms *hure*, *muroyi* and *mukadzi* as less obscene but hurtful. There are no instances in the data where male speakers use any of these terms to refer to other men. Working-class men and women use the term *hure* more frequently than their MC counterparts, although, even among the WC, men use it seriously more than women. There are however, cases where some women, especially sex workers, to whom the term literally apply, may use it jokingly to their friends.

We observed a man summoning a commercial sex worker, Lucy, age 26, (who served as our informant), outside a bar at night saying,

25. Iwe hure, uya pano.
(You prostitute come here.)

The use of *hure* implied the subhuman nature of the addressee and the exploitative power of the speaker. Sensing the debasement in the speaker's tone, Lucy complained,

26. Unonditi hure ndinohura nemuti?
(Why do you call me a prostitute as if I
have sex with a tree?)

Interestingly, one block away Lucy approaches her friends talking to a cigarette vendor and addresses them saying,

27. Hesi mahure.
(Hello prostitutes.)

to which the friends happily rely

28. Hi hwaga.
(Hello prostitute.)

On a different occasion in her neighbourhood in Glen View Lucy picks a fight with a woman who accuses her of sleeping with her husband and calls her

29. Uri hure, imbwa chaiyo.
(You are a prostitute, a real dog.)

What is clear from the use of the term *hure* on the three occasions involving Lucy that we encountered and her responses on each occasion is that insults serve many diverse functions, often determined by context and the relationship of the interlocutors. The functions of the term *hure* in the cited cases ranged from contempt to solidarity and then humiliation. When Lucy exchanged the term with her friends, *hure* signified endearment, but its use on Lucy by the Glen View woman is offensive. The use of *hure* by ‘prostitutes’ for self-reference renders the insult impotent. Similar observations have been made about the African Americans’ use of the term *nigger* for themselves (cf. Larkey, Hecht and Martin 1993, Naylor 1995).

There are a few cases of mothers who said that they address their daughters as *hure* when they dress indecently, date more than one men in a short time, when they receive gifts from boyfriends, or when they get in the habit of clubbing. The use of this term in such instances serves a social control function.

The term *muroyi* appears in the speech of both men and women, although it appears more in women's speech. In both instances, the addressee is either a man or woman. Literally, *muroyi* refers to a witch/wizard, but its social meanings in the data are extreme selfishness, intense cruelty, astonishing generosity, remarkable creativity, and notable caring attitude. The term appears in adult speech, jokingly between spouses or lovers, friends and acquaintances. One man scolds his wife saying

30. Uri muroyi chaiye iwe! Kunyepera
kupinda ruwadzano.
(You are a real witch yet you deceive
people by being a member of the
Christian women's fellowship.)

for spending money meant for her stepson's school fees. The term *muroyi* here indexed anger at the woman's selfish behaviour. Josphine, age 26, praises her husband for buying her a car,

31. Iwe muroyi chaiye iwe. *I am so happy*
ufunge nezvaunondiitira.
(You are a very incredible person. I am
overwhelmed by your kindness.)

In this context, Josephine uses *muroyi* playfully to signal a compliment for the husband's astonishing generosity. The two examples of usage presented here show how a literally negative term can assume both negative and positive meanings depending on the context of use and the speaker's intention.

The term *mukadzi* occurs mostly in serious insults. In many cases, the consequences of the usage are devastating. There are cases where WC parents especially fathers, caregivers and peers use it to young boys. One man claimed that he sanctions his 5-

year old son for fighting with her younger sister over her teddy bear by calling him “*sisi*” or saying

32. *Tichakutengerawo skirt since wava mukadzi.*
(We will have to buy you a skirt since you prefer to be a woman.)

They said that the boy often responded by angrily tossing the teddy bear away and going out to play alone. The child’s reaction shows his awareness of the gender stereotypes of play styles. Therefore, while the primary function of the insult is to control the child’s behaviour in one particular setting, it also serves a broader function of reinforcing the socialisation of a boy child into an appropriate gender (see Maccoby 2000, Langlois and Down 1980).

Occasions of highest occurrence involve adult male friends, acquaintances and rarely strangers. Many men insult their opponents (friends or acquaintance) in a disagreement by calling them, “*Uri mukadzi!*” (You are a woman). This insult is often intended to provoke them into a fight or to shame them. *Mukadzi* in such a situation implies physical inferiority and weakness. This term becomes an insult only when the addressee has a masculine self-image. Hence, Murray (1979: 214) says that, “whether a term implying degree of masculinity or femininity is taken to be insulting depends on the self-image of the person being categorised.”

Calling *mukadzi* or *mukadzi wanhingi* (So-and-So’s woman) a man who considers himself manly or anxious about his manhood is highly abusive. The story of Jeter Dube who fatally shot and killed a fellow policeman for derisively referring to him as

“mukadzi waBanana” (Banana’s wife) in the popular Banana case of sodomy in the late 1990s reveals the hurtful nature of insults and their grave consequences. It appears that Dube killed his colleague because the insult jabbed his true weakness. We therefore, agree with Opie (1970: 355) (cited in Allen 1983: 14), the folklorist of children’s lore, who wrote that the well-know doggerel on name-calling should be re-phrased: “Sticks and stones just break my bones/ its words that really hurt me.”

9.4 Summary

We have seen that Shona has a large number of insults or terms of abuse. We classified the terms as light, medium or heavy, with the largest number of terms being light or medium, since this group includes all the creative categories of various kinds of defects, animals, etc., and with only sexual terms, terms that refer to parts of the body and excretions being marked as heavy. The factors that determine how speakers choose and use insults are social class, social status, age, gender, setting, and communicative intention.

Generally, speakers from all classes use insults as address resources although those in the MC tend to shun the use of such terms completely or use light terms while WC speakers use insults more often and of all categories. Insults occur more frequently in male speech, to either men or women, than in female utterances. When women use insults they use a lighter portion of the scale than do the men of their social class. Two factors are attributable to this difference. First, it appears that use of insults is more preponderant on the street, the space that Shona men of various age groups, but particularly of the WC, seem to dominate. Second, it appears that cultural rules of

“politeness” and other forms of behaviour in public places constrain women more than men.

Speakers use terms of abuse both playfully and seriously. They use them playfully to intimates, especially friends and lovers, in which case the abusive meaning is not taken at face value. In other words, the social meaning, determined by the intended function of the term takes precedence over the literal meaning. However, parents, relatives, siblings, teachers, opponents, strangers may use abuse terms seriously to express anger, annoyance, disgust or disapproval of addressee. Although parents generally use insults in reprimanding their children, but again, usage is very strictly correlated to social class; upper class parents generally use only light terms to their children, middle class parents may have a slightly broader range, and only working class parents use the heavy terms to their children.

On a pragmatic level, using and interpreting terms of abuse involve several different levels of meaning: who the speaker thinks he is and who he thinks the addressee is, how angry he is with the addressee, whether the addressee is a close friend or not, as well as the surface level of the “dictionary” definitions of the terms and the implications of the dictionary definitions.

Finally, we should point out that insults are expected in certain situations, and therefore, since they are expected, they do not carry the illocutionary force they may seem to carry to an outside observer. For example, parents are expected to use abuse terms to their children as part of the socialisation exercise and teachers are expected to use terms of abuse to students although many middle class speakers would be

surprised to hear a term of abuse from a parent or a teacher, and if they hear one they would assume that it expressed extreme anger. Working-class speakers, on the other hand, expect to hear (relatively light) terms of abuse from teachers, and they therefore hear the terms when used by teachers as expressing slight annoyance, or merely a simple correction of a student. The same thing applies to the use of (light) terms of abuse to one's friends, children, and in various other situations. We can therefore, safely claim that an instance of insult usage cannot be properly interpreted without knowing the speaker and addressee's social class, their level of acquaintance, the interactive setting they are in, and whether (and which) terms of abuse are expected in that situation.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters we have examined in some detail the address and/or reference practices of Shona speakers drawn from different ‘relational/mini cultures’ and speech communities. The analysis centered on identifying the terms used, the patterns of use and the social meanings of these terms. Meanings were uncovered largely through named speech events in which the intentions and interpretations of personal address and reference terms are encoded. Cultural premises embedded in these address or reference terms were discussed. Before we recap the address and reference patterns that emerged from this thesis and the address and reference rules deriving from these patterns, we shall state the unique contribution of this thesis to the study of personal address in particular and personal relationships research and theory in general.

10.2 Tying theoretical loose ends

The unique contribution of this thesis is three-fold. First, we have implicitly challenged the notion that the values and assumptions embedded in personal relationships research and theory constructed in Euro-American contexts is universal. Most studies on Euro-American (and quite occasionally some Asian and African societies) address systems have used, confirmed and sometimes modified the monumental Brown and Gilman’s (1960) model. We shall briefly outline the major attempts to support or modify this model in order to situate our own contribution or variance.

As stated in Chapter 1, Brown and Gilman (1960) propose a two-dimensional parsimonious model of social meaning (Burgoon and Hale 1984: 194, Winchitz 2001: 339). Following Brown and Gilman (1960), Brown (1965) suggests that all expressions of social meaning can be mapped into a two-dimensional space with the vertical axis being power and the horizontal axis being solidarity. In other words, Brown suggests that there exist two semantic dimensions of social meaning that are universal to all languages and along which all expressions of social meaning can be located in semantic space.

Brown and Gilman (1960) define the power semantic as asymmetrical. It determines which pronoun is used on the basis of the difference in social status (or power) between the speaker and the addressee. When an imbalance of power is symbolized in speech, it is usually done by those with more power using the informal pronoun and receiving the formal pronoun from those with less power (Wanchatz 2001: 339). The solidarity semantic, however, represents more balance between individuals and is symmetrical. Brown and Gilman note that, "The similarities that matter [for the solidarity semantic] seem to be those that make for like-mindedness or similar behaviour dispositions" (258). Interlocutors often display solidarity by addressing or referring to each other using either the formal or informal pronoun.

Brown and Gilman applied their model on Indo-European languages, mainly Western European (excluding contemporary standard English) and postulated that these languages have pronouns, which can be used for marking the social and affective status of the participants in a communication act. They proposed the symbols T and V (from the Latin *tu* and *vos*) to represent familiarity and politeness, respectively. This

distinction is analogous to that between first name (FN) and title last name (TLN) in English and Shona, for instance. Brown and Gilman

put forward a hypothesis for the origin and spread (within a particular social and historical framework) of differentiated second person address in European languages and for the stimulus diffusion of their semantic system into adjacent language areas (McGivney 1993: 20).

Although many other researchers eventually adopted and applied Brown and Gilman's two-dimensional model to varied languages and cultures, several theorists have challenged its adequacy (Fitch 1991, Burgoon and Hale 1984, 1987; Danziger 1976; Friedrich 1972). Fitch's (1991) study of terms of address in Colombia calls Brown and Gilman's model "deterministic" (256). She points out that,

A deterministic theory like Brown and Gilman's suggests a mechanistic, formulaic view of meaning construction: 'If objective social condition A, B, and C exist, address X is used to mean Y. Conversely, if X is used, social conditions A, B, and C are inferred to exist.' Such an approach cannot account for creative or strategic uses of language, nor can it incorporate the subtleties of metaphors that enrich and complicate the literal and conventional uses that are encompassed by such models (256).

Fitch, like Takao (1976), instead, adopts a cultural approach, which seeks to discover the meanings of address terms shared by a particular group of people. Fitch argues that personal address terms serve a referential 'pointing' function (i.e. by addressing another person, a speaker invokes personal identities and establishes a definition for

the relationship between speaker and addressee). In her study of situated meanings of Colombian *Madre* terms, Fitch shows how certain permutations of *Madre* invoke particular norms (e.g. to show affection or respect) and also indexes particular Colombian cultural premises about personhood and relationships. This interest in examining the meaning of particular communicative acts according to those who use and produce them (Hymes 1972, 1974; Philipsen 1992) is what inspires the present study.

Some researchers have attempted to increase the number of dimensions from Brown and Gilman's two. Friedrich (1972), for example, in his study of the Russian pronoun use proposes the addition of a third dimension by separating intimacy as a third dimension. Winchitz (2001: 362) commends the addition saying, "This separation allows such German social meanings as closeness, friendship, isolation, liking, ... to be more easily accounted for, as these are not necessarily aspects of solidarity relationships but rather more often come into play when interlocutors share something between each other." But, Winchitz still admits that,

Although Friedrich (1972) did make an important move to distinguish solidarity and intimacy as two distinct meanings that cannot be represented in the same dimension of semantic space, ... German social meanings relating to the atmosphere or conversational level between interlocutors (e.g. conversableness and structured) also appear to have no place in Friedrich's three-dimensional model (362).

Winchitz, following Burgoon and Hale (1984) goes on to propose his eight-dimensional model for German. Although Winchitz says that the eight themes are still inadequate for describing the use of *Sie* (the equivalent of *Vous* in French) in German, his results prove that any study of communication that starts from the language user rather than predetermined universal criteria will yield results that are peculiar to that culture. Many years ago Hymes (1972) urged researchers to examine the “means of speech ... and their meanings to those who use them” (p.2). Such an approach focuses on the variety of meanings speakers bring to their interactions and, in turn, would open up a way to get at the nuanced particulars of social meaning that present-day theories ignore (Philipsen, 1992, Wanchatz, 2001).

While we acknowledge Brown and Gilman’s model and confess that its basic assumptions also apply to Shona, our data revealed glaring weaknesses in this model. First, the speakers’ creativity referred to by Fitch makes many address forms polysemes for they do not maintain a unique but a contextual character. This leads us to conclude that forms of address are dynamic and acquire different meanings depending upon the situation and the speaker’s intention.

Second, the presentation of the native Shona speakers’ interpretations of how they use address or reference resources and the social meanings deriving from these uses has revealed two things. First, it has shown that the more parsimonious two- or three-dimension models of scholars such as Brown and Gilman (1960), Brown (1965), Friedrich (1972), Danziger (1976), and others cannot adequately account for the important distinctions and communicative complexities and emotions expressed through address or reference terms in Shona. Second, this thesis has provided

evidence that support Hymes' (1972) view that only situated ethnographic data of speakers' communicative choices and their interpretation of these choices can enhance our understanding of the distinctive and complex systems of interpersonal relating that underlie daily interactions.

But, as a way of highlighting some of the limitations of the parsimonious models we need to see the extent to which these models would account for the social meanings revealed by Shona address or reference terms when they are used as explanatory tools. The basic principle of Brown and Gilman's model is that all social meanings in every language can be mapped somewhere onto the vertical axis of power or the horizontal axis of solidarity. There are as many as 15 social meanings of the Shona terms that can be subsumed under these axes. For example, such social meanings as power, status and respect could be mapped under the power axis, and the *associative relationship*, *spiritual relationship*, and *solidarity*, among others, could be mapped onto the solidarity axis.

The adequacy of the two-dimension model becomes questionable when one attempts to subsume the social meanings of *intimacy*, *social control*, *contempt*, *flattery*, *patronage* and *knowing other*, for instance, under these axes. While solidarity can be described as a feeling of commonality or unity between individuals based on group membership, intimacy, on the other hand, refers to how interlocutors are attached by something emotional between and within them rather than something outside the relationship. Therefore, "although solidarity and intimacy could, theoretically co-exist, *solidarity* does not subsume *intimacy*, as is the case in Brown and Gilman's

(1960) two-dimension model” (Winchatz 2001: 361). The social meaning of patronage, according to Shona speakers, refers to a speaker’s conversational attitude.

In summary, it is clear that the two-dimension model tends to lump together some social meanings that Shona speakers perceive as distinct and separately meaningful. Many researchers of address systems adopt Brown and Gilman’s model because of its simplicity (e.g. Hudson 1996). Brown (1965) hailed this simplicity, thus, “we need some scheme for classifying relations more narrowly, a scheme that will help us see regularities and to understand them” (73). However, the present study has revealed that probably the model’s inadequacy is a consequence of this simplicity.

Friedrich (1972), for example attempted to expand the two-dimension model to three by separating intimacy from solidarity. This split allows such Shona social meanings as *friendship*, *intimacy*, *knowing other* to be easily accounted for. In spite of this important move, Friedrich’s three-dimension model inherits the Brown and Gilman model’s limitation of combining distinct meanings such as power and status, for example. Although power and status can go hand in hand, a person of a higher status than another does not necessarily have power to influence that person. The case of a church minister and members of his congregation given above is an obvious example. The minister occupies a higher status than members of his congregation in the church hierarchy, but may not have real power to influence them. Thus, while Friedrich’s model moves in the direction of a model that can account for the distinctiveness of complex semantic systems, it still cannot adequately account for all social meanings found for the Shona case.

Burgoon and Hale (1984) have taken significant steps to address the inadequacies of the parsimonious models by introducing a 12-theme model. They argue that interlocutors can express their relational messages along 12 distinct but interrelated themes. When they tested these themes empirically in their (1987) study, they then reduced them to 8 dimensions: immediacy-affection (intimacy 1), similarity-depth (intimacy 11), receptivity-trust (intimacy 111), composure, formality, dominance, equality, and task oriented.

Burgoon and Hale's (1987) model allows for more complexity and finer distinctiveness between meaning to emerge. When the data from the Shona case are applied to Burgoon and Hale's (1987) eight-dimension model, the Shona meanings: *distance, friendship, intimacy, knowing other, politeness, status* and *power*, can be accounted for. However, many other meanings, which did not fit neatly in the previous models, such as *age, adulthood, respect, anger, arrogance, rejection, isolation, coldness*, etc, remain unaccounted for.

We have deliberately avoided suggesting any numerical limit to the range of social meanings indexed by Shona address or reference terms, since the fluidity and polysemic nature of the terms provide room for an infinite-dimension model. Such a model moves away from determinate, parsimonious schemes that claim universality to more interpretive, ethnographically based ones formulated with reference to "the speaker's intent or the addressee's interpretation of the speaker's intent" (Kendall 1981: 237).

The present study, like many other similar ones, has revealed that there are as many relational features that could be perceived as universal as there are particular ones. Features such as kinship terms tend to widen the boundary between those features that are akin to Western societies and those that apply to African societies, since these societies seem to conceptualise the notion of kinship differently. Of the social meanings discovered for Shona, the social meanings of age, adulthood, respect, knowing the other, associative relationship, spiritual relationship, for example, would apply more to the African than Western context, while intimacy, solidarity, power, status, politeness, friendship, patronage, affection, would apply to both societies. However, the realisation and interpretation of each feature would still vary culturally.

This thesis, therefore explicates a culturally distinct system of meanings for a particular communicative resource as expressed and interpreted by the interlocutors themselves. This approach allows research in this area to “expand our knowledge of the links between culture and communication, resulting in the possible enhancement of cultural understanding between individuals and societies” (Winchitz 2001: 366). The present study will, hopefully act as a springboard for similar research in African address systems, especially the creative use of address terms in urban settings.

10.3 Address and reference patterns and rules

We have demonstrated that the form of address or reference a speaker adopts depends on a number of factors, interpersonal as well as contextual. The interpersonal dimension is important since address or reference terms primarily function on the level of the relationship between speaker and addressee or referent, marking kinds of social meanings. A term may mark who the speaker thinks s/he is, whom s/he thinks

the addressee or referent is, what s/he thinks their relationship is and what s/he is trying to accomplish with the utterance.

We however, stressed that much of the Shona speakers' address behaviour is attributable to their culture's premise, beliefs and values about personhood (*unhu*), relationships (*ukama*) and gender. The notion of *ukama* has implications for measuring the degree of closeness between interlocutors or social distance. Social distance determines the degree of comfort of politeness/defence in a verbal exchange. Our data revealed that although Shona culture generally constrains the patterns of address or reference, interlocutors tend to violate the cultural rules to achieve pragmatic effect or to change the existing relationship.

In chapter 1 we hypothesised that the social determinants of reference are essentially those of address. Our data has revealed that this is true to a great extent except that when choosing terms of address, the speaker-addressee relation is paramount. In contrast, when selecting a referring expression, the presence of the referent and the speaker-addressee-referent relationship creates a more complex situation: the speaker must take into account the addressee, the referent and him/herself simultaneously. When the referent is present, the speaker and addressee have to be intimate in order for the speaker to use an implicit or covert referent term whose interpretation derives from the speaker and addressee's shared knowledge.

The absence of a referent is important in that the interlocutors (speaker and addressee) can refer to him/her using a term that they would not use directly, such as personal name for a teacher, nickname for a parent, etc. Like in address, the audience or

bystanders also influence the speaker's choice and use of a term of reference. When the audience or bystanders share an intimate relationship with the referent, the speaker adopts a generalised, covert or ambiguous referent term to save the audience or bystander's face or avoid an altercation, unless the speaker chooses to openly insult both the audience and the referent.

The diversity and creativity involving urban Shona address behaviour makes it virtually impossible to suggest any systematic rules of address, except those pertaining to social distance, degree of respect/disrespect or politeness/impoliteness. Within the broader Shona urban community are individual social networks with their relational/mini cultures. These cultures (e.g. the family, friends, colleagues, spouses, classmates, churchmates, etc) share certain address repertoires with the larger community, but have their idiosyncratic address vocabulary or unique social meanings of widely used vocabulary. Use and sometimes knowledge of specialised address vocabulary tends to be restricted to insiders. Some address licence such as joking or playful insulting, is also limited to group members or even within the group, some degree of closeness.

Rules of respect determine address behaviour towards people of a certain age, social status, marital status and sex. For example, parents have the privilege to call their children by personal name or nickname, while the latter can only do so in reference and older people, strangers or acquaintances, are addressed by terms that index respect or politeness such as title only, title plus last name, teknonym, or kinship term. However, these rules are adopted creatively and varied social meanings are derived thereof.

Our data have shown that younger speakers on the street, both men and women frequently violate address rules to achieve pragmatic ends. Normally, only close friends, acquaintances or lovers can exchange endearment slang terms or playful insults, but we saw that touts, vendors and commercial sex workers use these terms to strangers.

The predominance of a street culture and language manifested through the use of insults and the violation of verbal taboos, especially by lower and working class speakers shows the impact of urbanisation, poverty, unemployment, for example, on human relations and behaviour. Obviously, this thesis raised issues that have implications for debates on sexual harassment, verbal abuse/assault, unruly speech and free speech in urban Zimbabwe.

It was clear from the thesis that men and women often give and receive different terms of address. Women of all classes use less slang and insults than men, although on the street some working class women, such as vendors and commercial sex workers share the same repertoire with men.

The predominant use of kinship terms to non-relatives shows that the main trait of the Shona society is their sense of relationship (*ukama*). This concept is clearly manipulated to express varied social meanings and to achieve desired pragmatic ends. It appears that the Shona use the notion of kinship to form tight social networks in the city where members are entitled to rights and privileging normally limited to real relatives. The present study therefore, has implications for related studies concerned

with the influence of kinship in relational interaction such as business management, training and counselling in an African context.

10.4 Implications for linguistic research

The polysemic and indexical nature of Shona address or reference terms reveals the simplicity of the standard [generative] grammatical approach. The general conception of the task of the linguist (regardless of whether he/she is a syntactician, semanticist, lexicologist, phonetician, etc., - and there is a lot of overlapping in these artificial distinctions) is that of accounting for the native speaker's knowledge of his/her language. Chomsky (1965) named this 'linguistic competence'.

Adherents of this approach claim a clear boundary between 'competence' and 'performance', between '*langue*' (the internalised knowledge of grammar) and *parole* (the actual use). In their view the goal of linguistic theory is to describe an abstract construct – "a discrete system of grammatical rules divorced from the sociocultural context of language use" (Winford 2003: 23). Chomsky (1986) refers to this abstraction as "Internalised" language or "I-language," and distinguishes it from "Externalised" language or "E-language" and questions whether the latter can become an object of serious study.

Contrary to sociolinguistic theory, the standard linguistic theory relies on knowledge of an ideal speaker-hearer, intuition and 'normal' interpretations. Yet, this thesis, like several other research programmes, has shown that in urban areas, especially, words are not always used in the 'normal' sense. Linguistic variation and manipulation are rampant. Hence, words carry lexical meanings (of "I-language") as well as social

meanings (of “E-language”). However, in order for interlocutors to successfully interpret the social meaning of a word (address term) they use both their intuitive judgement of the ‘normal’ use of the word and their evaluation of the specific social or interactive situations. This means that even creative or ‘abnormal’ uses depend also for their (social) meanings on the meaning of the term in its ‘normal’ use. For example, when a speaker uses a serious abuse term to an addressee, the seriousness of the abuse depends on the addressee’s knowledge of both the word’s lexical meaning and idiomatic meaning. The non-linguistic means used by the speaker and the context also help the addressee to interpret the usage as implying “you have done something worthy of abuse,” rather than, “you are my intimate friend”.

This analogue shows that the usual “I-language” “E-language dichotomy limits the efficacy of linguistic theory. The search for social meaning (often neglected) provides insight into how “I-language” is linked to “E-language” or grammatical competence is linked to communicative competence (Smitherman 2000). We suggest that it is high time linguistic theory reasserts the complementary relationship between studies of I-language and studies of E-language, rather than treating them as polar opposites. This suggestion re-emphasises the call for adherence to “socially realistic” linguistics that has grown tremendously in recent years.

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