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A Sociopragmatic Study of Saudi Arabic Address Terms: Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication

Ahmad I Alhojailan 

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Buraydah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

Many studies have investigated terms of address, primarily focusing on Western languages. However, few studies have explored this topic in varieties of the Arabic language. This study examines the use of terms of address in Saudi Arabic, investigating the terms used by Saudi men and women, the effect of the addressees' age and gender on the selection of address terms, and the linguistic patterns employed by Saudis when addressing each other. Twelve participants from two large cities in Saudi Arabia took part in the study. A semi-structured interview featuring 12 different social situations was conducted to answer the research questions. The interviews were conducted in the Saudi Arabic dialect to elicit authentic and realistic responses. The data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and trends in the use of address terms. Seven categories of address terms were identified. Furthermore, the age and gender of the addressees were found to influence the choice of terms. Moreover, five linguistic patterns were used by the participants to address each other. These findings provide important insights into professional settings where understanding suitable address terms can lead to more productive and culturally acceptable communication.

Keywords: Address Terms; Culture; Pragmatics; Sociolinguistics; Gender

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Ahmad I Alhojailan, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Buraydah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Email: a.alhojailan@qu.edu.sa

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 12 August 2024 | Revised: 13 September 2024 | Accepted: 18 September 2024 | Published Online: 14 November 2024
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i5.7031>

CITATION

Alhojailan, A.I., 2024. A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Saudi Arabic Address Terms: Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 6(5): 522–534. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i5.7031>

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1. Introduction

As language is a medium of communication that plays an important role in human interaction^[1, 2], linguists began recognizing the significance of context in the interpretation of sentences as early as the early 1970s. Sociolinguists have begun focusing on why people talk differently in different social settings. As Holmes^[3] asserts, “examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community.” An interesting issue in studying communication between people is learning how to address each other. To understand how communication creates interpersonal bonds, it is important to understand how people initiate conversations and address each other in specific languages^[4].

This subject has been investigated in various languages (e.g., Afful^[5], Keshavarz^[6], Mahzari^[7]). However, only a limited number of studies have investigated address terms in different dialects of Arabic (e.g., Alenizi^[4], Masliyah^[8], Parkinson^[9]). The rules that control how people address each other are different in each culture, complicated, and are influenced by various factors such as gender, class, age, religion, age, and relationship^[10–13]. Additionally, Afful^[5] claims that “different speech communities are likely to be different since different languages have different linguistic resources to express what is culturally permissible and meaningful.” Consequently, different linguistic groups may use different forms of address, and social variables that affect one linguistic community may not have the same effect on another. Moreover, Braun^[14] stated that although several terms can be used in the addressing system and that they are all grammatically correct, social characteristics determine which term should be used.

1.1. Importance of the Study

Keshavarz^[6] highlights the need to study address forms because they depict the relationship between language and society. Additionally, such studies will highlight the differences between various cultures and communities regarding the different languages used in those cultures and communities. Linguistic techniques play an important role in conveying an interlocutor’s perspective and evaluating their relationships^[15, 16]. They act as bridges between social and linguistic

contexts, providing pragmatic and sociological information about speakers and their relationships in various settings^[17]. Therefore, they play an essential role in communication^[18].

Keshavarz^[6] further indicates that the study of address terms reveals the complex social relations of individuals in a given speech community. Moreover, using incorrect address terms may lead to undesirable results. For example, a woman in Germany was fined 2.250 DEM because she addressed a policeman as *du* rather than *Sie*, which was considered an inappropriate address. Additionally, studying the forms of addresses is important because:

address term usage may be interpreted differently across communities, in practice and contexts. Using the proper address term is expected to identify them as one group; whereas, the improper usage of address terms may be viewed as an indicator of the negative attitudes and may obstruct or cease social interactions^[18].

Finally, few studies have explored address terms in Arabic^[19].

Despite the growing body of research on address terms in other languages, including Arabic dialects, there are still substantial gaps in the literature. Previous research has generally focused on Western languages or particular Arabic dialects such as Egyptian, Iraqi, and Jordanian Arabic; however, the socio-pragmatic usage of address phrases in Saudi Arabic has received very less attention. Furthermore, the few studies that explored address terms in Saudi Arabia focused on students^[20], employees^[21], or in an online setting^[7]. As a result, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the address terms produced by different age groups and opposite genders.

1.2. Research Questions

This study sought to identify the address terms in Saudi Arabic, which are commonly used by the Saudis in Saudi Arabia, and the linguistic patterns of address statements employed in the interactions. Therefore, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are the terms of address used by Saudi men and women?
- What is the effect of the addressee’s age in choosing the address terms?
- What is the effect of the addressee’s gender in choosing the address terms?

- What are the linguistic patterns used by the Saudis in Saudi Arabic to address each other?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework for this study is based on important principles from sociolinguistics and pragmatics, with a special emphasis on how language reflects and forms social connections. Brown and Levinson's^[16] Politeness Theory is one of the key concepts for this study. According to this idea, speakers utilize linguistic tactics to reduce face-threatening activities, which are firmly established in a community's social norms and cultural values. In Saudi Arabic, politeness methods are expressed through the use of address phrases that differ depending on age, gender, and social standing. The usage of terminology like teknonyms or kinship-based address forms might be seen as tactics for demonstrating respect or maintaining social peace, which are consistent with Politeness Theory ideas.

2.2. Address Terms

Several researchers have provided various definitions of address terms. For example, Braun^[14] considers terms of address as terms that refer to speakers' linguistic references to their interlocutors. Another definition is provided by Keshavarz^[6] who claims that address terms are "linguistic forms that are used in addressing others to attract their attention or for referring to them in the course of a conversation." Finally, Yule^[22] defines address terms as words or phrases used to define a person as being spoken to or written about.

Philipsen and Huspek^[23] note that:

In every language and society, every time one person speaks to another, there is created a host of options centering around whether and how persons will be addressed, named, and described. The choices speakers make in such situations, and their meanings to those who interpret them, are systematic, not random. Such systematic language behavior, whether of use or interpretation, is universal, although what elements comprise the personal address system and what rules govern its development, vary across contexts. And such variation in structure is, according to the extant empirical literature, correlated with social ends and social

contexts of language use. From this view, personal address is a systematic, variable, and social phenomenon, and these features of it make it a sociolinguistic variable of fundamental importance.

The address terms demonstrate how social connections are regulated within a particular culture^[3, 24]. They have been the center of research in disciplines such as sociolinguistics^[3, 24–28], pragmatics^[29], socio-pragmatics^[30], and cognitive pragmatics^[31, 32]. Address terms constitute a complex system of social hierarchy^[33], cultural values^[34], and interpersonal communication^[30].

Braun^[14] argues that address terms are used to start conversations. They also have social functions. According to Murphy^[35], these terms are socially conditioned phenomena. This feature of address terms reflects the complicated social relationships between people^[27, 36]. Additionally, Parkinson^[9] claimed that all terms "encode much information about who the speaker believes he is, who he believes the addressee is, what he thinks their relationship is, and what he thinks he is doing by saying what he is saying."

Address terms act not only as stereotypical indicators of politeness based on how often they are used in conjunction with other related signals, but also as deictic indicators (person, social, etc.), attention grabbers, indexical indicators (referential features such as man/woman, youth/age, etc.), and relationship indicators such as deference/intimacy between people who are talking to each other^[18, 37, 38].

2.3. Types of Address Terms

Braun^[14] identifies eight types of the most frequent terms of address:

- Personal nouns and nicknames (e.g., Ali).
- Kinship terms (e.g., Uncle).
- Titles (e.g., Mr.).
- Abstract nouns (e.g., (Your) Honor).
- Occupational terms (e.g., Boss).
- Relationship terms (e.g., friend, classmate, and neighbor).
- Endearment terms (e.g., Dear).
- Teknonymy—the name of an adult derived from that of a child (e.g., Abo Hatem, meaning the father of Hatem).

2.4. Factors Affecting the Type of Address Terms Used

People generally use various terms and titles to address each other, depending on the relationship between them and differences in age, education, gender, social status, and so on. Brown and Yule^[39] state that “in different social contexts different terms of address will be used.” Moreover, Holmes^[3] notes that many factors determine the type of social distance between people, such as being members of the same family, sex, age, whether the interlocutors work together, and social roles. Additionally, Afful^[5] reports that address forms rely on several social factors, such as religion, economic status, ethnicity, age, and gender.

Brown and Gilman^[33] and Brown and Ford^[40] produced two pioneering works in the early 1960s on European and American English forms of addresses, respectively. Both studies established that age and sex played important roles in choosing which strategy to use. Moreover, Al-Khatib^[41] analyzed the address system in Jordan, describing address norms in Jordanian society in detail. The results of this analysis indicate that the terms of address used in Jordanian Arabic are not arbitrary but functional and are governed by several social factors, including social distance, socioeconomic status, gender, age, and profession.

Using discourse completion tasks, Alenizi^[4] established that Saudi Arabic speakers use the following techniques as address terms: first names, teknonyms, common names, kin terms, terms of endearment, titles, occupation, and address by gender (boy/girl). Similarly, Mardiha^[42] explored the effects of gender and age on Iranian students' use of address terms. The data revealed that age was more important than gender in choosing pronouns in the Persian address system.

In his study of cultural forms of address, Hwang^[43] discovered a notable contrast between American and Korean cultures. He found that Korean culture places restrictions on the use of first names, whereas American culture predominantly employs only first names. This distinction reflects the deeper cultural values and norms in both societies.

2.5. Terms of Address in Different Languages

An increasing number of researchers are interested in examining address forms in various contexts^[44, 45]. These

studies have shown that speakers from different cultures and languages have a wide range of terms of address that are used in different ways in different contexts and reflect social power and solidarity relationships^[18, 31, 46–48].

Various studies have explored address terms in different languages. For example, Oyetade^[49] addressed this topic in the Yoruba language in Nigeria. Keshavarz^[6] discussed address forms used by Iranians in Tehran. Furthermore, Yoon^[50] conducted a study of address terms practiced in Korea and found that the most common terms of address in Korea are kinship terms and job titles. Similarly, Qin^[51] investigated terms of address in Chinese and established that kinship terms are the most used terms of address among Chinese people. Additionally, Anchimbe^[46] studied terms of address in the Cameroonian community and found that the use of people's names as address terms was not common. He attributed this behavior to the effects of culture, in which using names is considered a sign of disrespect. Finally, Suyana et al.^[52] explored address terms in Japanese.

Several studies have explored term usage in various Arabic dialects. For example, Masliyah^[8] examined terms of address in Iraqi Arabic and established that the term of address most used by Iraqis was the teknonym. Potter^[53] studied the use of address terms by Moroccans and indicated that personal nouns were the most commonly used address terms. Moreover, Al-Refaie^[15] explored address terms used in Jordanian Arabic. He established eight forms of address: personal pronouns, verb forms of address, title terms, names, terms of intimacy, kinship/family terms, teknonyms, and attention attractors. Additionally, the findings indicated that names and kinship were the most used, whereas verb forms of address and attention attractors were the least used. Similarly, Mahzari^[7] explored the use of address terms by Saudi Facebook users in Arabic and established that the most common address terms were teknonyms, proper names, and terms of endearment.

Additionally, Almalki and Alharbi^[20] explored the gender differences in address terms usage among Saudi University students. The findings indicated that the social context has an effect on the choice of address terms; factors like age, status, and relationship with the addressee have a role in choosing the suitable address terms. Similarly, age was a determining factor in choosing the address terms in Lebanese Arabic^[54]. Moreover, exploring the use of professional ad-

dress terms in Saudi Arabian workplaces, Yousef^[21] found that male employees tend to use formal terms with female colleagues, and female employees were found to use less formal address terms when addressing the opposite gender. Finally, Nasser^[55] pointed out that level of education has a significant role in choosing the forms of address terms.

3. Methodology

3.1. Instrument

To determine the terms of address used in Saudi Arabia, - semi-structured interviews were conducted. Participants were given 12 hypothesized situations representing different social contexts, and were asked what they would say if they were in such a situation (see **Appendix A**). The interviews were conducted in colloquial Saudi Arabic (the language of the interviewees and the researcher), and the situations used in this study were created by a researcher from the same country as the interviewees to simulate an everyday situation.

The 12 hypothetical circumstances were chosen with the purpose of eliciting realistic responses that reflected the intricacies of social relationships in Saudi Arabic culture. These settings were carefully designed to replicate numerous social circumstances that participants are likely to face in their everyday lives, ensuring that the responses obtained are relevant and realistic. The study sought to capture the intricacies of address terms used across distinct social dynamics by including a varied variety of scenarios, such as interactions with friends, family members, and strangers of all ages and genders. This technique is consistent with the sociolinguistic emphasis on contextual diversity in language usage, since it allows for a full investigation of how factors such as age, gender, and social ties impact the choice of address terms among Saudi speakers.

3.2. Participants

The participants were six men and six women from Saudi Arabia. Three of the men were over 50 years old, and the rest (three males) were under 30 years. Similarly, three women were over 50 years old and the other three were under 30 years. All participants were residents of Buraydah and Riyadh cities, the Najd area, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The participants were homogenous regarding their

cultural background (Saudi Arabia). More information about the participants is provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics.

	Gender	Age	Occupation
1	Women	58	Homemaker
2		55	Homemaker
3		54	Homemaker
4		27	Teacher
5		25	Graduate student
6		22	Undergraduate student
7	Men	64	Businessman
8		62	Retired teacher
9		61	Retired employee
10		30	Teacher
11		29	Physician
12		21	Undergraduate student

The group size and occupation data used in this study were carefully chosen to increase its robustness and validity. The study sought to capture a full picture of address terms usage in Saudi Arabic by incorporating a balanced sample of twelve individuals, six men and six women from various age groups and vocations. This diversified representation is critical because it enables for the investigation of how various social characteristics, such as gender, impact the selection of address phrases. This methodological technique not only improves the dependability of the findings, but it also assures that the results represent the intricacies of address phrase usage across many socioeconomic strata in Saudi society, providing unique insights into the language's socio-pragmatic environment.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from participants through interviews. The participants were contacted by the researcher's friends. The instructions were provided in Saudi Arabic and no time limit was imposed. The participants signed consent forms. Participants' answers were translated into English by the researcher and checked by a colleague who held a Ph.D. in English and was a fluent Arabic speaker. After the answers were translated, they were coded to investigate the terms and patterns of the addresses used by the participants.

3.4. Data Analysis

The coding procedure was divided into several phases. First, I identified all of the main elements from the individual interviews. The next stage was to identify common themes throughout interviews. As a consequence, some common themes were identified. During the coding process, I iteratively decreased the amount of codes and subcodes to get a more ordered and hierarchical view of how the participants used address terms. Finally, the coding procedure was finished with the assistance of another researcher with previous coding knowledge. When we disagreed, we would discuss the reasons until we reached a consensus on which code should be applied to that specific sentence.

4. Findings and Discussion

This study obtained 142 address terms from the participants' responses. Although each participant was asked about 12 situations (therefore, the number of address terms should be 144), two participants mentioned that they would not say or do anything in two situations. Seven categories for terms of address were identified from the participants' responses—names and nicknames, endearment terms, teknonymy, age-related terms, personal pronouns, neutral terms of address, and zero-address terms.

4.1. Categories of Terms of Address

4.1.1. Names and Nicknames

Names are used to address people who are known to the addresser. They are typically used when the relationship between the interlocutors is intimate. Moreover, they are used without being accompanied by any other form of address (e.g., Mr., uncle). Similar to the studies conducted by Potter^[56], Maalej^[31], and Al-Refaie^[15], the first name category was the most used category by the participants, contrary to some of the conducted studies (e.g., Mahzari^[7], Anchimbe^[46], Yoon^[50], Qin^[51]).

First names are frequently used as a form of address when the interlocutors have a close personal relationship. This is because using first names alone, without titles or honorifics, conveys friendliness and closeness. In many cultures, including certain Arabic-speaking groups, using a person's first name denotes a link of trust or affection, generally indi-

cating an informal and welcoming relationship.

Additionally, some participants used nicknames. Nicknames are typically used to refer to children, siblings, close friends, and spouses. Nicknames are mostly derived from the original names of the people. For example, if the original name is "Abduallah," the nickname is "Aboody" (a diminutive form of the first name). A possible justification for using Nicknames is that it can also lead to intimacy.

4.1.2. Endearment Terms

To express affection, some participants used endearment terms. This term is usually heard among spouses, children, close family members, and relatives. Some examples of endearment terms are the words /habibi/ and /habibti/, meaning my lover (masculine singular and feminine singular, respectively). Furthermore, the term /hayati/, meaning my life, was found in the corpus of this study.

The employment of these fondness phrases represents a widespread linguistic practice in Arabic-speaking communities, where language is essential for expressing and preserving interpersonal connections. This data lends credence to the notion that affection terms are more than simply words; they are cultural instruments that aid in the communication and maintenance of close relationships among persons in their daily lives.

4.1.3. Teknonymy

Teknonyms are common in Saudi Arabia. In the past, only the first son's name was used; however, currently, people in the Saudi community have begun to accept being called by their first daughter's name, such as Abo Joury, meaning the father of Joury (Joury is a girl's name). In this study, the participants stated that, in some situations, they would say Abo fulan, meaning the father of so-and-so, and Om fulan, meaning the mother of so-and-so. Moreover, teknonymy terms, according to the participants, are used when the status of the interlocutors is at the same level (e.g., both are young men), or when the addressee is older than the addresser (e.g., a young man addressing an old man). Additionally, these terms are used to show respect to the addressee.

The use of teknonymy by the participants is not surprising. According to Parkinson^[9], teknonymic practices are very common in Arabic culture, wherein "great value is ascribed to the act of producing sons." However, unlike the findings of Masliyah^[8], who showed that teknonymy is

widely used in Iraqi Arabic, and those of Mahzari^[7], who explored the use of address terms by Saudi Facebook users in Arabic and established that the most common strategy was teknonyms, this strategy was not among the top strategies used by the participants in this study.

4.1.4. Age-Related Terms

The data gathered for this study revealed that the participants used the words /khal/ and /aam/, meaning uncle, to address people who were older than themselves. Moreover, it was established that speakers would use such terms whether they knew the addressee or not (as long as the addressee was older than the addresser).

Speakers use /khal/ and /aam/ to show cultural respect for age, which is an important part of social interaction in many traditional communities. These expressions convey a sense of reverence, recognizing the elder's greater position owing to their age. This method is especially crucial in conversations with strangers, as it helps to develop a courteous and polite tone. Addressing an elderly person as "uncle" helps to close the social gap between people, promoting a sense of community and mutual respect.

4.1.5. Personal Pronouns

Although they are usually used in face-to-face conversations, the second-person pronouns /ant/ and /anti/, meaning you (masculine singular and feminine singular, respectively), were also used as terms of address in this study. They were mentioned once, by one speaker, indicating that they are not commonly used by Saudis.

The use of the second-person pronouns /ant/ and /anti/ (meaning "you" in masculine singular and feminine singular forms, respectively) as terms of address in Arabic is typically associated with direct, face-to-face interactions in which the speaker addresses someone directly and personally. In many Arabic-speaking societies, particularly in Saudi Arabia, the use of direct pronouns as address words is reserved for certain situations like familiarity, equality, or immediacy. This differs from the more prevalent usage of titles, kinship terms, and other kinds of indirect address that communicate respect, social distance, or hierarchy.

The fact that /ant/ and /anti/ were stated just once, by one speaker, implies that they are not often used as address words among Saudis. This infrequency is most likely due to cultural preferences for more formal or courteous ways of

address. In some situations, using pronouns like /ant/ and /anti/ may be perceived as overly direct or even disrespectful, especially when interacting with elders, strangers, or those of higher social standing. In such circumstances, Saudis may choose to employ more culturally acceptable phrases that uphold anticipated social etiquette.

4.1.6. Neutral Terms of Address

This category includes terms such as /rajol/, meaning man; /emra'ah/, meaning woman; /walad/, meaning boy; and /bent/ meaning girl. Additionally, it includes terms such as /okhty/, meaning my sister; /akhoy/, meaning my brother; /benty/, meaning my daughter; and /walady/, meaning my son, despite there being no blood relationship between the addresser and addressee.

These terms are typically used when addressing a man, woman, or child who is not known to the speaker and is the same age or younger than the addresser. For example, In Saudi Arabia, "okhty" is used as a fictive familial address phrase in schools and communities and when addressing female strangers. It is widely used in Arab countries because it creates "a feeling of trust and ease in dealing"^[57], is considered courteous, and conveys a sense of solidarity^[4]. However, this is different in Indonesia, where the term is mostly used by women in religious groups^[58].

Such usage underscores the cultural importance of language in forging social relationships and mutual respect in Saudi Arabia and other Arab societies. These phrases are especially successful at instilling a sense of familiarity and closeness, even between strangers, by evoking the intimacy associated with familial bonds.

4.1.7. Zero-Address Terms

Zero-address terms refer to situations wherein the addresser does not use any terms when addressing the addressee (e.g., Take your watch). People tend not to use address terms when they doubt which address terms should be used.

Table 2 shows that participants used names and nicknames (27.7%) more than any other category. Similarly, personal pronouns (0.6%) were used less frequently than any other category. A possible explanation for this is that personal pronouns are typically used in face-to-face conversations. Additionally, culture may have an effect here as "the use of first name at all times is a rule rather than the exception in the various dialects of Arabic"^[56].

Only a few responses (5.5%) used endearment terms. This low percentage may be explained by the fact that such terms are typically used by spouses, known children, and

close friends. Lastly, age-related and zero-address terms were used in similar percentages (18.7% and 15.9%, respectively).

Table 2. Categories of address terms.

	Category	Example	Frequency
1	Names and nicknames	“Abduallah” and “Aboody”	27.7% (40)
2	Endearment terms	/habibti/ = <i>my lover</i> /hayati/ = <i>my life</i>	5.5% (8)
3	Teknonymy	<i>Abo Marwan</i> = The father of Marwan	7.6% (11)
4	Age-related terms	/khal/ = <i>uncle</i>	18.7% (27)
5	Personal pronouns	/ant/ = <i>you</i>	0.6% (1)
6	Neutral terms of address	/rajol/ = <i>man</i> /Okhty/ = <i>my sister</i> /walad/ = <i>my boy</i>	22.2% (32)
7	Zero-address terms	No address terms	15.9% (23)

Table 3 provides summaries of the percentages of the terms of address categories used by male and female participants.

Table 3. Categories of address terms used by male and female participants.

	Category	Males	Females
1	Names and nicknames	26% (19)	29.1% (21)
2	Endearment terms	0% (0)	11.1% (8)
3	Teknonymy	9.7% (7)	5.5% (4)
4	Age-related terms	22.2% (16)	15.2% (11)
5	Personal pronouns	0% (0)	1.3% (1)
6	Neutral terms of address	30% (22)	13.8% (10)
7	Zero-address terms	11.1% (8)	20.8% (15)

Note: Frequency is presented in parentheses.

When comparing the findings regarding the categories of address terms used by male and female participants, several generalizations were drawn. As illustrated in **Table 4**, unlike female participants, male participants did not use any endearment terms. This finding corresponds with Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s^[59] finding that men’s language reflects their toughness and lack of affection. Moreover, the table indicates that female participants used names and nicknames more than their male counterparts. Surprisingly, only one female participant used personal pronouns. Additionally, male participants used neutral terms of address more than female participants (30% and 13.8%, respectively). Finally, similar

to the findings of Mohammed^[60], female participants used zero-address terms of address more than male participants.

4.2. Effect of Age

The age of the addressee is very important in Arabic culture. Therefore, if the addressee’s age is greater than that of the addresser, the addresser will refer to them as uncle or aunt even if there is no blood relationship between them. Such behavior shows a strong cultural norm in addressing elderly people with respect. Additionally, it is considered impolite to address someone older than you by their first name.

In contrast, when addressing female of the same age or children, the choice of address terms is more influenced by familiarity. Personal nouns and nicknames are widely used to refer to known young people or youngsters, implying a more intimate, informal relationship. When the recipient is unknown, neutral or endearing terms are used more frequently. The usage of neutral terms like “girl” for unknown young people represents a broader perspective, whereas affection terms like “dear” are used to express a sense of warmth or friendliness, even in the absence of a personal relationship.

Similar to some previous studies (e.g., Alenizi^[4], Aful^[5], Al-Khatib^[41], Mardiha^[42], Mansour^[54]), the findings of this study indicate that age affects the choice of address terms. As depicted in **Table 3**, 18.7% of the address terms

used by the participants in this study were age-related. Regarding the differences between male and female respondents in using age-related terms, **Table 4** indicates that male respondents used such terms more than female participants (22.2% and 15.2%, respectively). This result may be because women tend not to use any terms that indicate the age of the addressees when the addressees are women. Therefore, we established that the age-related terms used by women in this study were mostly directed at men.

4.3. Effect of Gender

Gender plays a role in the selection of address terms, as indicated by the results of this study, which are similar to previous studies^[4, 5, 20, 21, 41, 42]. We observed the effect of the addressees' gender on the answers provided by the participants. For example, a young female participant reported that her response to another young woman would be "You forgot your cellphone," whereas her response to an older man in the same situation would be "Your cell phone fell down." When asked about her reasons for different responses, she mentioned that women are usually more sensitive than men; therefore, they should be treated differently.

Another example is the answer provided by an older male participant. This participant replied to Situation 1 (You are sitting with an old man whom is known to you. His wallet fell and he did not notice that.) as "Uncle, your wallet fell down. Here it is" and to Situation 2 (You are sitting with an old woman whom is known to you. Her cellphone fell and she did not notice that.) as "Who is the owner of this?" Although the events in both situations were similar, one occurred with a man and the other with a woman. Similar to the female participant, the male participant indicated that women are sensitive, making it imperative to be careful regarding the style of speech used when addressing them.

Moreover, two female participants (an old and a young one) revealed that they would not do anything in Situation 7 (which addresses seeing a watch falling from an unknown young man). By contrast, the same two participants stated that they would call an unknown young woman and give her a watch (Situation 6).

4.4. Patterns of the Addressing Statements

Participants used different linguistic patterns as addressing statements (see **Table 4**). The patterns used by the Saudi

participants can be categorized into the following groups:

- Address terms + reason for calling that person + complement. For example, Uncle! Your wallet fell out. Here it is.
- Address terms + reason for calling that person. For example, Ali's father! Your cell phone has fallen.
- Address terms + action + complement. For example, Sami (the name of the child), (and then I will hug him). This is your toy.
- Action. For example, I take a watch and give it to the owner without saying anything.
- Statement. For example, You forgot your cellphone.

Table 4. Linguistic patterns used by the participants.

Pattern	Frequency
Address terms + reason for calling that person + complement	25.6% (37)
Address terms + reason for calling that person	57.6% (83)
Address terms + action + complement	1.3% (2)
Action	6.2% (9)
Statement	7.6% (11)

Note: Frequency is presented in parentheses.

According to **Table 4**, more than half of the responses provided by the participants (57.6%) followed the "address terms + reason for calling that person" pattern. Surprisingly, only two responses (1.3% of the whole responses) followed the "address terms + action + complement" pattern.

Table 5 shows that both male and female participants used the "address terms + reason for calling that person + complement" pattern more than any other pattern. However, the least used linguistic pattern differed between the two groups. The least used pattern among male participants was the "statement" pattern, and the least used linguistic pattern among female participants was the "address terms + action + complement" pattern.

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study cannot be generalized to all Saudi Arabic speakers; however, they do provide insights into the general stance of address terms in that community. The participants in this study used seven categories of address terms—names and nicknames, endearment terms, teknonymy, age-related terms, personal pronouns, neutral

Table 5. Patterns used by male and female participants.

Pattern	Males	Females
Address terms + reason for calling that person + complement	22.2% (16)	29.1% (21)
Address terms + reason for calling that person	68% (49)	47.2% (34)
Address terms + action + complement	2.7% (2)	0% (0)
Action	6.9% (5)	5.5% (4)
Statement	0% (0)	15.2% (11)

Note: Frequency is presented in parentheses.

terms of address, and zero-address terms. Most respondents used the names and nicknames category more than the other categories (27.7%). The personal pronoun category was the least used by respondents (0.6%). Moreover, further analysis indicated that male participants did not use any endearment terms in their responses.

One of the more significant findings of this study is that the age and gender of the addresser and addressee play important roles in choosing the terms of address. The respondents used age-related terms to show respect for older adults. Moreover, male participants used this term more often than female participants. Additionally, the behavior of the addresser and their choice of address terms changed when they were addressing a different gender.

Furthermore, the participants used five linguistic patterns of addressing statements—“address terms + reason for calling that person + complement,” “address terms + reason for calling that person,” “address terms + action + complement,” “action,” and “statement.” Over half of the answers (57.6%) provided by participants indicated the use of “address terms + reason for calling that person + complement” pattern. A minority of participants’ answers (1.3%) indicated the use of “address terms + action + complement” pattern.

The study has some limitations, which should be addressed in order to contextualize its conclusions. For starters, the study’s concentration on two cities, Buraydah and Riyadh, limits its relevance to other parts of Saudi Arabia, where cultural norms and address word usage may vary. Furthermore, the study focuses on address terms in informal situations, excluding formal or professional settings, which may display different patterns of address.

Future studies should explore the differences between address terms in Saudi Arabic in terms of different social classes. Moreover, they should examine the role of education in influencing the terms and patterns of address used. They should also address whether the occupation of the addressee

plays a role in making people address that person as a doctor or engineer, rather than their first name or teknonymies. Another interesting area to be explored is the differences between people who live in rural areas and those who live in urban ones in terms of the used address terms. Finally, future studies should explore the address terms belonging to religious scholars.

Funding

The Researchers would like to thank the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at Qassim University for financial support (QU-APC-2024-9/1).

Informed Consent Statement

All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were guaranteed, and participation was completely voluntary.

Data Availability Statement

Data available upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

The hypothesized situations

1. You are sitting with an old man who is known to you. His wallet fell, and he did not notice it. How would you tell him?
2. You are sitting with an old woman who is known to you. Her cellphone fell, and she did not notice it. How

would you tell her?

3. You are sitting with an old man who is not known to you. His wallet fell, and he did not notice it. How would you tell him?
4. You are sitting with an old woman who is not known to you. Her cellphone fell, and she did not notice it. How would you tell her?
5. You are walking in the mall and you saw a watch fall from a young man you know. How would you draw his attention?
6. You are walking in the mall and you saw a watch fall from a young woman you know. How would you draw her attention?
7. You are walking in the mall and you saw a watch fall from a young man you do not know. How would you draw his attention?
8. You are walking in the mall and you saw a watch fall from a young woman you do not know. How would you draw her attention?
9. You are in the park and you saw a toy fall from a child you know. He did not notice. How would you tell him?
10. You are in the park and you saw a toy fall from a child you know. She did not notice. How would you tell her?
11. You are in the park and you saw a toy fall from a child you do not know. He did not notice. How would you tell him?
12. You are in the park and you saw a toy fall from a child you do not know. She did not notice. How would you tell her?

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