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From morphophonology to sociolinguistics: The case of Akan hypocoristic day-names

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Abstract

During hypocoristization in Akan, such morphological processes as compounding and reduplication as well as such (morpho)phonological processes as deletion, tonal change and vowel harmony take place. Akan hypocoristic personal day-names provide an insight into morphological status marking. Hypocoristic forms may be used in a superior-to-subordinate communicative context, among equals and in a subordinate-to-superior context. When used in a superior-to-subordinate interactive context, hypocoristic names express affection, tenderness, playfulness, warmth, and the idea of being loved and of being considered worth caring for. It may also denote smallness or diminutiveness of the referent. Among equals, hypocoristic names may be used to show playfulness, oneness or 'we'ness and sometimes, teasing. In a subordinate-to-superior situation, hypocoristic forms, if not preceded by a polite terminal addressive (i.e., a word or an expression denoting deference), express teasing, disrespect towards the referent, unusual familiarity with the referent and/or an unusual friendliness on the part of the speaker. It may also suggest that the referent is not respectable.

1. Introduction

This paper has two aims. The first aim is to add to the study on hypocorisms in general by describing hypocoristic day-name formation in Akan, a language with three main written dialects – Asante, Akuapem and Fante – spoken by most of the Akan peoples who inhabit most of the forest and coastal areas of Ghana and the southeastern part of the Ivory Coast in West Africa. In particular, I describe the morphological and morphophonological processes encountered during hypocoristic personal day-name formation. A

description of the above-mentioned processes is preceded by a brief description of Akan naming practices.

The second aim of the paper is to describe hypocoristic forms as morphological status markers. Specifically, I look at the communicative contexts in which such hypocoristic forms may be used and show how discourse participants may react to their (hypocoristic forms') various uses.

Every Akan personal day-name (a name based on the day of the week on which one is born) has one or more hypocoristic forms. As far as I know, this paper is the first relatively comprehensive phonotactic, morphotactic and sociolinguistic description of Akan day-names. Opoku's (1967) work on Akan customs merely lists the Akan day-names and their appellations. Boadi's unpublished manuscript on 'Akan Syntax' (the only detailed work on Akan morphology and syntax) makes no mention of hypocoristic forms. Neither does Dolphyne's (1988) work on Akan phonology and morphology mention hypocorisms in Akan. The chapter of Madubuike's (1976) book on the so-called naming traditions of Akan is full of wrong facts and spelling mistakes. For example, he claims his informant tells him that during the naming ceremony 'the elder dips his fingers three times into the mouth of the child, saying: "If you have come to stay, this is your name"' (Madubuike 1976: 103). This claim is totally wrong. What happens is that the elder dips his/her finger into a glass of water three times and into a glass of wine three times, each time touching the tongue of the child and saying, 'If you see water, say water; if you see wine, say wine.' As Sarpong (1977) and Yankah (1991) explain, the officiant is by this symbol introducing the child into an Akan philosophy of life. The child is to be truthful always. He is not, for example, expected to see water and say it is wine.

Second, *Abehjha* (which Madubuike claims means that the father or mother or some relation died when the child was born) is not an Akan name. A child born at a time when such a tragedy as the one described above befalls its parents or relations is called *Ehyia* or *Ahyia*.

Finally, the meanings he gives to some of the names are wrong. For example, an eleventh born child is referred to as *Duku* and not *Dubako*. *Dubako* refers to the number eleven and is never used as the name of a person. Also, *Kumiwa* is the female equivalent of *Kumi* and does not mean 'a killer'. Madubuike confuses the appellations of names with their meanings. A close look at Madubuike's work on the Akan, therefore, indicates that he was terribly misinformed. The above discussion points to the fact that very little exists on Akan names and naming practices.

1.1 Akan naming practices

The Akan have numerous naming practices. As already noted, every Akan male and female, has a personal day-name, a name which relates to the day of the week on which they were born (e.g., *Kwadwo* for a male born on Monday; and *Adwoa* for a female born on Monday; *Kofi* – male born on Friday, *Afia* – female born on Friday), an appellation of that day name (e.g., *Okoto* for *Kwadwo*), a proper given name which may be his father's name or the name of any person after whom he was named,¹ an appellation of that given name, and many other names

If a child is born on an 'important' day such as a festival (e.g., *Adae*,² *Bronya* – Christmas, etc.), or on a day on which good luck or indeed bad luck struck the parents, the town's folks or the villagefolks, then the child gets a name reflecting the occasion – luck or the calamity.

There are special names for twins and children born after them (e.g., *Ata* – name given to twins, *Tawia* – a child born directly after twins, etc.). If one's parents 'suffer' or suffered from child or infant mortality, one is likely to have an *apɛnɛdin* – a funny name or a name believed to be capable of preventing and/or eliminating totally such deaths since it has the power of preventing 'parents in the underworld' from causing the death of such children.

The location where a person is born can also serve as a name for the person. A male person born on *Monday* in *Kumasi* may be called *Kwadwo Kumasi*; one born on Friday in *Bloomington* may be called *Kofi Bloomington*. It is possible for someone born in the hospital to be called *Dokota* (doctor/hospital). An Akan born may also have a name which corresponds to his position in the family, what Madubuike (1976) calls positional name. First and second born children may be called *Obueakwan* and *Manu* respectively.

1.2 Hypocoristic names

Hypocoristic names or hypocorisms are 'referred to variously as pet names, fondling endings, terms of endearment, diminutive, effeminate diminutive and familiarity markers' (Newman and Ahmad 1994: 159). In Hausa they tend to portray both the affection of a speaker as well as the diminutive nature of the referent, e.g., *Sàaléélé*, the hypocoristic form of *Sáalè* connotes 'my dear little Sale'.

In Hausa hypocoristic formation primarily involves affixation or reduplication. In Akan it also involves deletion, vowel harmony, tonal change as well as prolongation of syllabic and phonic units.

Prior to describing the sociolinguistic relevance of hypocoristic forms (i.e., the use of hypocoristic forms as morphological status markers), I describe hypocoristic day-name formation in Akan by describing the morphological and morphophonological processes encountered in hypocoristic formation.

2. Morphological processes found in hypocoristic personal day-name formation

Akan makes use of two main morphological processes – compounding and reduplication – and as many as four morphophonological processes – deletion, change in tonal pattern, vowel harmony, and phonic/syllabic prolongation in creating different types of hypocoristic forms. The hypocoristic forms of the various day-names are represented in Table 1 (p. 43).

2.1 Compounding

Compound hypocoristic names are represented in Table 2 (p. 44). The roots that come together to form *kɔ́binéé!bó* are *kɔ́biná* and *ébó*. The final /á/ vowel (which is -ATR) of the first element of the compound is assimilated into /é/ – a +ATR vowel. *àtɔ* and *kwàáminá* come together to form *atɔkwàáminá*. *jàájàá* is a hypocoristic compound name formed by reduplicating the entire root – *jàá* – whereas *á!bájàá* is made up of *á!bá* and *jàá*.

An interesting feature about *àkósɔ́ɔ́àsí* is that the two free morphemes *àkósɔ́ɔ́* and *ésí* that come together to form it are not from the same Akan dialect. *àkósɔ́ɔ́* is from Asante Twi whereas *ésí* is from Fante. This hypocoristic form indicates that the final -ATR vowel [a] of the first element of the compound is raised into a +ATR vowel [a̠] by the initial [e] vowel of the second word. The [e] vowel is then changed to the +ATR low vowel [a̠].

A scrutiny of all the hypocoristic compounds above, indicate that the stem structure of the elements of the compound are maintained in the hypocoristic forms. *àkósɔ́ɔ́àsí*, for example, has a VCVCV–VCV structure and the elements that come together to form it *àkósɔ́ɔ́* and *àsí* have the structure VCVCV and VCV. Looking at this hypocoristic form and the elements from which it was formed, the only difference one notices is the change in quality of the final vowel of *àkósɔ́ɔ́* from -ATR to +ATR. In *atɔkwàáminá* and *jàájàá* the vowel and consonant structure as well as the tonal structure of the non-hypocoristic forms are maintained in the HC forms. *atɔkwàáminá* has a VCV–CVVCVCV word structure. The stems *àtɔ* and *kwàáminá* that come together to form the compound have the structure VCV and CVVCVCV

Table 1. Akan day-names and their hypocoristic forms

| Day | Regular ortho-graphic form (M) name | Non-hypocoristic form | Hypocoristic variants | Regular ortho-graphic form (F) name | Non-hypocoristic form | Hypocoristic variants |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| <i>ɛdwoada</i> (Monday) | <i>Kwadwo</i> (T) <i>Kojo</i> (Fa) | <i>kwàdzɔ́</i> <i>kòdzɔ́</i> | <i>dzɔ́ò</i> (T/Fa) <i>dzɔ́òdzɔ́</i> <i>kò</i> (T/Fa) <i>kúd</i> <i>kèé</i> (T/Fa) <i>jòdzɔ́</i> (Fa) | <i>Adwoa</i> (T/Fa) | <i>àdzɔ́</i> | <i>àwùràádzɔ́</i> <i>èwùràádzɔ́</i> |
| <i>ɛbenada</i> (Tuesday) | <i>Kwabena</i> (T) <i>Kɔ́bena</i> (Fa) <i>Ebo</i> (Fa) | <i>kwàbí ná</i> <i>kòbiná</i> <i>ébó</i> | <i>kòbí</i> (Fa) <i>kèé</i> (T/Fa) <i>kòbinéé!bó</i> (Fa) <i>kòbéè</i> (T/Fa) | <i>Abena</i> (T) <i>Araba</i> (Fa) | <i>àbináá</i> | <i>àbí</i> <i>àwùràábináá</i> <i>bùbí</i> |
| <i>Wukuada</i> (Wednesday) | <i>Kwaku</i> (T) <i>Kweku</i> (Fa) | <i>kwàákú</i> <i>kwèékú</i> | <i>kúú</i> <i>kúúkú</i> <i>kèé</i> <i>àbèékú</i> | <i>Akua</i> (T) <i>Ekua</i> (Fa) | <i>àkú!á</i> <i>àkú!á</i> <i>èku!á</i> | <i>kú:kú!á</i> <i>àwùràákú!á</i> <i>èwùrèékú!á</i> |
| <i>Yawoada</i> (Thursday) | <i>Yaw</i> (T) <i>ɛkɔw</i> (Fa) | <i>jàw</i> <i>èkɔw</i> | <i>kòw</i> | <i>Yaa</i> (T) <i>Aba</i> (Fa) | <i>jàá</i> <i>á!bá</i> | <i>jàájàá</i> <i>á!bájàá</i> <i>bàáb!á</i> <i>bùbí</i> |
| <i>Efiada</i> (Friday) | <i>Kofi</i> (T/Fa) | <i>kòfí</i> | <i>kèé</i> <i>kò</i> <i>fí</i> <i>fífí</i> <i>jòfí</i> | <i>Afua</i> (T) <i>Afia</i> (T) <i>Efua</i> (Fa) | <i>àfúá</i> <i>àfíá</i> <i>èfúá</i> | <i>àfí</i> <i>é!fè</i> <i>àwùràáfíá</i> |
| <i>Memeneda</i> (Saturday) | <i>Kwame</i> (T) <i>Ato</i> (Fa) <i>Kwamena</i> (Fa) | <i>kwàámí</i> <i>àtɔ</i> <i>kwàá miná</i> | <i>kèé</i> <i>àtɔkwàámí</i> <i>ná</i> <i>mūmí</i> | <i>Ama</i> (T) <i>Amba</i> (Fa) | <i>ám! má</i> <i>ám! bá</i> | <i>àwùràám! má</i> <i>èwùràám! má</i> |
| <i>Kwasiada</i> (Sunday) | <i>Kwasi</i> (T) <i>Kwesi</i> (Fa) | <i>kwàsí</i> <i>kwèsí</i> <i>àkwàsí</i> | <i>sū</i> <i>sūsí</i> <i>kèé</i> <i>àkwàs</i> | <i>Akosua</i> (T) <i>Esi</i> (Fa) | <i>àkósɔ́ɔ́</i> <i>ésí</i> <i>kòsɔ́ɔ́</i> <i>àkósúá</i> | <i>àkó</i> <i>àkó</i> <i>àkósɔ́ɔ́:sí</i> <i>àkòs</i> <i>èwùrèésí</i> |

Key to table: ´ = high tone; ` = low tone; ! = downstepped tone.
T = Twi; Fa = Fante; M = Male; F = Female

respectively. *jàájàá*, which has a CVV–CVV structure, is formed from a reduplicated CVV structure.

Table 2. Compound hypocoristic names

| Compound hypocoristic forms | Units of the compound |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>kòbiné!bó</i> (Fa) | <i>kòbin</i> + <i>èbo</i> |
| <i>àtòkwàáminá</i> (Fa) | <i>àtò</i> + <i>kwàáminá</i> |
| <i>àkósɔ́íàsí</i> (Ak/As) | <i>àkósɔ́íá</i> + <i>ési</i> |
| <i>èwùrèésí</i> (Fa) | <i>èwùràá</i> + <i>ési</i> |
| <i>àwùràádžɔ́ó</i> (Ak/As) | <i>àwùràá</i> + <i>àdžɔ́ó</i> |
| <i>èwùràázɔ́ó</i> (Fa) | <i>èwùràá</i> + <i>àdžɔ́ó</i> |
| <i>àwùràábínáá</i> (Ak/As) | <i>àwùràá</i> + <i>àbínáá</i> |
| <i>àwùràákɔ́í!á</i> (Ak/As) | <i>àwùràá</i> + <i>àkɔ́í!á</i> |
| <i>èwùrèékú!á</i> (Fa) | <i>èwùràá</i> + <i>èkú!á</i> |
| <i>àwùràáfíá</i> (Ak/As) | <i>àwùràá</i> + <i>áfíá</i> |
| <i>èwùrèéfúá</i> (Fa) | <i>èwùràá</i> + <i>éfúá</i> |
| <i>àwùràá!má</i> (Ak/As) | <i>àwùràá</i> + <i>á!má</i> |
| <i>èwùràám!bá</i> (Fa) | <i>èwùràá</i> + <i>ám!bá</i> |
| <i>jàájàá</i> (Ak, As and Fa), (Fa) | <i>jàá</i> + <i>jàá</i> |

Apart from *Yaa* (Thursday-born female name) all the other feminine day-names have hypocoristic forms which are compounds formed by adding *awuraa* (Ak,As) or *ewuraba* (Fa) to the non-hypocoristic day-name. Thus, *èwùrèésí* is formed by combining *èwùràbá* and *ési*. In forming *èwùrèésí* the last syllable *.bá* of *ewuraba* is deleted and [a] vowel of the *.ra* syllable is assimilated into a +ATR vowel [e]. In all the Fa compound HC forms, the final syllable *.bá* of *ewuraba* is deleted. In the Twi dialects the final syllable *.a* is deleted. Thus instead of having something like *àwùràá!má* we have *àwùrà!má*.

In Fante, three non-hypocoristic day-names; *Kojo*, *Kofi* and *Kwesi* have hypocoristic forms which are formed from three words *yɛn* [jɛn]+ *wura* [wura] + the day-name. Thus we have such HC forms *asjòddžɔ́ó*, *jóðfí* and *jóðsí*. A close look at these hypocoristic forms indicates that there is 'massive' deletion going on. Only the initial consonant of the first element of the compound and the final syllable of the last words of the compound remain. A prolonged [o] vowel is then inserted between the [j] semivowel and the final syllable. Thus in [jòddžɔ́ó] we have the [j] consonant, a prolonged [o] and the final syllable *.džɔ́ó* of the non-hypocoristic form *kòdžɔ́ó*. In [jóðsí] we have [j], followed by a prolonged [o] and *.sí*, which is

the final syllable of the non-hypocoristic form *kwèsí*. [jóðfí] is made up of [j], [oo] and *.fí*. the final syllable of *kòfí*.

2.2 Reduplication

Eight out of the forty-four hypocoristic forms are reduplicatives. Six out of the eight are masculine and two are feminine. There is no reduplicative masculine hypocoristic form for Tuesday day-names and there appears to be no linguistic reason for that. Fante has a hypocoristic form *bíbí* for *Araba*. A close look at all the reduplicated hypocoristics reveals that during their formation, the initial syllable (or the first two syllables) of the non-hypocoristic form is/are deleted. This is then followed by a total reduplication of the second syllable. If the non-hypocoristic form is trisyllabic, the final syllable is not repeated. Another phonological feature associated with all the reduplicated hypocoristics is that the vowel of the prefix is always long. It must also be mentioned that all the reduplicated hypocoristics occur in Fante only.

džɔ́óddžɔ́ó is formed first by deleting the initial syllable *.kò* of the non-hypocoristic form – *kòdžɔ́ó* – and then making a complete reduplication of the remaining syllable *.džɔ́ó*. In the prefix, the final vowel segment [o] is prolonged. *kúúkú* is formed from *kwèèkú*. It is formed by deleting the initial syllables *.kwè* and *.è*. This is then followed by a repetition of the final syllable *.kú*. The [u] vowel of the prefix of the reduplicative is long.

The hypocoristic day-name *fífí* is formed from *kòfí*. In forming *fífí*, the initial *.ko* syllable of the non-hypocoristic form is deleted. The final *.fí* syllable is repeated and the [i] vowel of the prefix of the reduplicative is prolonged. The reduplicated hypocoristic form formed from *kwèsí* is *sîsí*. A look *sîsí* reveals that the initial *.kwè* of the non-HC form has been deleted. *.sí* is reduplicated and the [i] prefix of the hypocoristic form is prolonged.

kúúkú!á and *bàá!bá* are the only reduplicated feminine hypocoristic day-names in Akan. *kúúkú!á* is formed from *èkú!á* (a feminine day-name for people born on Wednesday). *kúúkú!á* is formed by reduplicating [ku], prolonging the [u] vowel of the prefix, and affixing the final *.a* syllable. *bàá!bá* is a hypocoristic day-name for female persons born on Thursday. Its non-hypocoristic form is *á!bá*. In forming it the initial [a] vowel of the non-hypocoristic form is deleted and the remaining syllable is reduplicated. Like the other hypocoristic forms, the vowel of the prefix is prolonged. The above discussion points to the fact reduplication in hypocoristic formation is template-based rather than stem-copying.

2.3 (Morpho)Phonological processes found in hypocoristic personal day-name formation

A lot of (morpho)phonological processes take place during hypocoristic day-name formation and prominent among them are: deletion; tonal change; and vowel harmony. These (morpho)phonological processes may occur singly or conjointly in a single hypocoristic form. I shall look at deletion in the next section.

2.3.1 *Deletion*. An observation of the hypocoristic day-names in the above table indicates that deletion is a prominent feature of hypocoristization in Akan.

2.3.1.1 *Word-initial deletion*. This is by far the most common type of deletion found in Akan hypocoristic forms. Examples of hypocoristic forms in which the initial syllable is deleted include: *dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀*; *dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀dzɔ̀*; *jòdɔ̀dzɔ̀*; *fî*; *fîfî*; *sî*; *sîsî*; *mîmî*; and *bàá!bá*. In all the above hypocoristic forms, the initial syllables of the non-hypocoristic forms are deleted. Three of the above examples are discussed below. In *dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀*, for example, the initial syllable .kwa. of the non-hypocoristic form *kwàdzɔ̀* is deleted. In *fî* the initial syllable .kò. of the non-hypocoristic form *kòfî* is deleted and the [i] vowel of the remaining syllable is prolonged. Finally, a look at *bàá!bá* reveals that the [a] initial vowel of the non-hypocoristic form *á!bá* is deleted. The vowel of the prefix of the reduplicative is made long. The downstepped high tone of the final syllable !bá., which occurs without a trigger, is however, maintained.

Hypocoristic forms whose underlying day-names have a CVCV or CVVCV structure and during whose formation the initial CV or CVV syllable is deleted, either have the form CVVCV, e.g., *dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀dzɔ̀*; *fîfî*; and *sîsî* (i.e., a long syllable followed by a short syllable) or CVV. *dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀*; *fî*; *sî*; *kòò*; and *kèé* are examples of hypocoristic forms with a CVV structure.

dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀dzɔ̀; *fîfî*; and *sîsî* have CVVCV structures and their non-hypocoristic forms have CVCV structures. *dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀dzɔ̀*; *fîfî*; and *sîsî* are formed from *kwàdzɔ̀*; *kòdzɔ̀*, *kòfî* and *kwasi* respectively. Each of the three non-hypocoristic forms listed in the previous sentence has a CVCV structure.

mîmî is formed from *kwàámí* (which has a CVCV structure), and what is significant about it is that its two initial morae [kwa] and [a] are deleted and the remaining syllable .mi. is reduplicated. The prefix has a prolonged vowel.

bàá!bá is formed from *á!bá* (which has a VCV structure). The initial .a. syllable of the non-hypocoristic form is deleted and the remaining syllable –.ba. – is reduplicated. *bàá!bá* has a CVVCV structure.

dzɔ̀ɔ̀dɔ̀, *kòò* and *kèé* which have a CVV structure, are all formed from *kwàdzɔ̀*, which has a CVCV structure. *fî* is formed from *kòfî* which is also disyllabic and has a CVCV structure. *sî*, another hypocoristic form with a CVV structure, is formed from *kwèsí* which is CVCV.

2.3.1.2 *Word-final deletion*. There are several instances of word-final deletion in the hypocoristic forms in Table 1. Examples are: *kòbì*, *kòbèè*, *kòbì*, *àbí*, *àkòs*, *àkwàs*, *àkòó*, *àfí*, and *é!fé*. *kòbì*, *kòbèè*, and *kòbì* are used as hypocoristic forms for *kòbiná*. A look at *kòbì* and *kòbèè*, then, reveals that they are of a CVCVCV structure in which the final CV is deleted. With regard to *kòbèè*, it may be argued that the trisyllabicity of the non-hypocoristic form is maintained in the hypocoristic form. The only difference between the hypocoristic and the non-hypocoristic form is in terms of the segments that form the words. Whereas *kòbiná* has CVCVCV structure, *kòbèè* has a CVCVV structure. Moreover, *kòbiná* has a L-L-H tonal pattern whereas *kòbèè* has a L-H-L tonal pattern. In all three examples – *kòbì*, *kòbèè*, and *kòbì* – we see that the final syllable .na. of the non-hypocoristic form has been deleted. With *kòbì* apart from the deletion of the final .na. syllable, the [I] vowel which is -ATR changes to a +ATR vowel [i]. *kòbì*, then, has vowels from both the +ATR and -ATR harmonic sets. Like *kòbì*, *kòbèè* is a mixed harmony word. [ɔ] is -ATR whereas [e] is +ATR. *kòbì* has vowels from the -ATR vowel set only. *àbí* is a hypocoristic form for *abina*. During its formation, the final syllable, .na., of the non-hypocoristic form is deleted and the -ATR vowel [I] of the remaining syllables .a.bI. is changed into a +ATR vowel [i].

I end this section by looking at three more hypocoristic forms – *àkòs*, *àfí*, and *é!fé*. *àkòs* is a hypocoristic form from *àkòsúá*. A close look at *àkòs* reveals that the final .a. syllable as well as the [u] vowel of the penultimate syllable .su. are deleted. Thus an underlying VCVCVV non-hypocoristic structure becomes a VCVC structure. With regard to *àkwàsí* becoming *àkwàs* we see a VCVCV structure rendered as VCVC. Both *àkòs* and *àkwàs* end in [s]. The fact that they end in an [s] is surprising because no native Akan word ends in an [s]. The word final consonants in Akan are [m n r w or ŋ]. It therefore comes as no surprise when people argue that *àkòs* and *àkwàs* are Anglicized hypocoristic forms (i.e., influenced by English, Ghana's official language.)

àfí is formed from *afia* (a Friday female day-name). It is only the [a] of the non-hypocoristic form which is deleted. Finally, *é!fé*, also formed from *efua* (a Friday-born female day-name) is formed by deleting the final [a] and changing the [u] vowel to [e]. The final high tone of the non-hypocoristic form is realized as a downstepped high tone in the hypocoristic form.

2.3.1.3 Utterance medial truncation. A look at the extracts in Table 1 above reveals that there is utterance medial truncation in hypocoristic forms like *jòdsí*, *jòdfí* and *jòddzɔ́*. In all three hypocoristic forms, there are instances of massive deletion (what I am calling truncation) going on. All three hypocoristic forms are formed from the string – *jɛn wura* ‘our lord’ – followed by the day-name. *jòdsí*, for example, is formed from *jɛn wura kwesi*. Here, the stretch [–ɛn wura kwe] is deleted. A prolonged [o] vowel is then placed between the remaining [j–] and [–si]. The same process of deletion is undergone by *jòdfí* and *jòddzɔ́*.

2.3.2 Tonal change. Many hypocoristic day-names undergo tonal change. I begin a discussion of the various tonal changes that take place by looking at some of the hypocoristic day-names associated with *kwàdzɔ́* (T) or *kòdzɔ́* (Fa). Whereas *kwàdzɔ́* has a L-H tonal pattern, *dzɔ́òd* has a H-L tonal pattern. Both *kèé* and *kòó* have a L-H tonal sequence which are realized phonetically as a rising pitch movement.

A look at the hypocoristic forms associated *kwàbiná* reveals a complete change in their tonal patterns. Thus in spite of the fact that *kwàbiná* is trisyllabic and has a L-L-H tonal sequence, *kòbì* and *kòbí* (which are both disyllabic) have H-L tonal pattern. *kòbèè* is also trisyllabic but does not have the L-L-H tonal pattern like the non-hypocoristic form. Rather it has a L-H-L tonal sequence. One also sees a tonal change in the hypocoristic form – *kòbinéé!bó* (a compound hypocoristic form formed from *kòbiná* and *èbó*). Whereas *kòbinéé!bó* has a L-L-H-H-!H tonal pattern, the elements of the compound – *kòbiná* and *èbó* – have L-L-H and L-H tonal patterns respectively. Specifically, the low tone of the initial syllable of *èbó* is raised to a high tone. However, the effect of the original low tone is still seen on the .*bó*. high-toned syllable. This high tone, then, is realized as a downstepped high tone. This phenomenon is similar to Dolphyne’s (1988: 58) first category of non-automatic downstepping. Thus, a High-Low-High tonal pattern changes to High-Low-Downstepped High and then to High-Downstepped High (H-L-H → H-L-!H → H-!H).

One also sees changes in the tonal pattern of the hypocoristic forms associated with *kwèèkú* and *kwàkú*. Specifically, whereas *kwèèkú* and *kwàkú* have a L-L-H tonal pattern, the hypocoristic forms – *kúùkú* and *kúù* – have H-L-H and H-L tonal patterns respectively. *àbèèkú*, also a hypocoristic form of the above day-name, has a L-H-L-H tonal pattern.

kòfí has L-H tonal pattern but its HC forms: *fífí* and *fí* have H-L-H and H-L tonal patterns respectively. A similar phenomenon obtains in the HC forms associated with *kwèsí*. Thus, although it has a L-H tonal sequence, its HC forms *súsí* and *sú* have H-L-H and H-L tonal patterns. I shall now take a brief look at the tonal patterns of three hypocoristic feminine hypocoristic

day-names; *é!fé*, *bàábá* and *àbí*. *é!fé* is a hypocoristic form for *é!fúá* (A Friday-born). A look at *é!fé* reveals that whereas the non-hypocoristic form has a H-H-H tonal pattern, *é!fé* has a H-!H tonal pattern. Although *àbí* (a day-name for a Tuesday-born) has a L-H tonal pattern, its non-hypocoristic forms *árábá* (Fa) and *àbináá* have H-H-H and L-H-H-H tonal patterns respectively. *bàá!bá* a HC form for a Thursday-born is formed from *á!bá*. Although *á!bá* has a H-!H tonal pattern, *bàá!bá* has a L-H-!H tonal pattern. The above discussion points to the fact that a tremendous amount of tonal change takes place during HC noun formation. The above discussion is, however, not meant to suggest that every hypocoristic form undergoes a tonal change. A look at *àfí* (a hypocoristic day-name for a Friday -orn), for example, indicates that apart from the final [a] which is elided the L-H tonal pattern of the first two syllables of the non-hypocoristic form is maintained in the hypocoristic form. It is, however, true to say that there is a considerable degree of tonal change during hypocoristic formation. There appears to be no consistent pattern of tone change during hypocoristic day-name formation.

2.3.3 Vowel harmony.³ Vowel harmony or co-occurrence restrictions in the distribution of vowels is an important phenomenon in hypocoristic formation in Akan. As expected, quite a number of hypocoristic forms have vowels from only one harmonic set – either +ATR ([i e a o u]) or -ATR ([ɪ ɛ a ɔ ʊ]). For example, in hypocoristic forms like, *dzɔ́òd*, *dzɔ́òddzɔ́*, *kòó*, *kèé* *kúddzɔ́òd*, and *jòdddzɔ́òd* all the vowels are +ATR, whereas, in hypocoristic forms like *à ú kwàáminá*, *á!bájáá*, *kòbì* and *bàá!bá* all the vowels are -ATR. All hypocoristic forms that are reduplicatives obey the vowel harmony rule since the vowel of the root or stem are copied or repeated in the prefix.

Some hypocoristic forms, however, have vowels from both the +ATR and the -ATR harmonic sets. In *àwùràádzɔ́ á*, *àwùràáfíá*, *kòbinéé!bó* and *kòbèè* we have vowels from both the +ATR and the -ATR harmonic sets. Another feature of the Akan vowel harmony rule which is broken by these hypocoristic forms is that whereas in Akan whenever we have words of mixed harmony the +ATR vowels come first, in hypocoristic forms of mixed harmony either the +ATR or the -ATR vowel can come first. In *àwùràádzɔ́ á*, for example, a +ATR vowels [a] and [u] come first whereas in *kòbinéé!bó* -ATR vowels [ɔ] and [ɪ] come first.

3. Hypocoristic day-names as morphological status markers

A close observation of the scholarship on Akan linguistics indicates that very little has been done on Akan sociolinguistics in general and on status

marking strategies in particular. Yankah (1991, 1995) and Obeng (1994, 1995, 1997) explore the use of deferential terms of address or polite terminal addressives, honorifics, and indirectly authored speech forms to mark asymmetry in status in Akan. In all the above works, the authors stress the need for politeness especially in interactions involving people with unequal status and indicate how such discourse participants, especially subordinates, signal respect. Obeng (1996) goes a little further to explore the consequences of status marking in Akan judicial discourses in claiming that, among other factors, the use of deferential terms of address and reference in the right communicative context adds to a judicial professional's credibility and may even influence a jury's decision.

In this section, I explore the use of hypocoristic forms as morphological status markers in Akan. I demonstrate that hypocoristic forms are usually used among equals and by a superordinate to refer to or address a subordinate. I demonstrate further that improper use of a hypocoristic form as a term of address or reference is face-threatening and can result in a confrontation.

I begin the discussion by recounting a 'tense' incident which occurred in my village (Asuom), Ghana, in April 1993 after my return from a two-month study visit to the University of California at Los Angeles. I had gone to the village to pay 'homage' to my parents, and as I narrated the motif behind my visit (in accordance with custom), a man in his late twenties (about twenty-eight years old), one of the people listening to my message, was addressed by an eight-year old boy as *Koo* [ko:] instead of *Kwadwo* [k^wædzɔ] or, more appropriately, *Braa Kwadwo* [bra:k^wædzɔ]. This twenty-eight-year old man immediately yelled:

- (1) *Wommu adeε woahu? Wo tipɛn ne me? Sɛ*
 you-neg-respect thing you-see your head-level be me if
woremfrɛ me Braa Kwadwompo a, frɛ me Kwadwo kɛkɛ na
 you-neg-call me brother kwadwo even if call me kwadwo just and
worefrɛ me Koo. Wo deε yɛ me rɔɔfo na me nsa sɔ
 you-prog-call me koo you as-for do me rough and my hands hold
wo mu a, na wobɛhu sɛ yɛs pawa wɔ baabi.
 your inside if foc. you'll-see that yes power be somewhere
 'Dare you call me Koo! Aren't you respectful? Are you my peer in age
 (co-equal)? If you won't call me Brother Kwadwo then just call me
 Kwadwo. You go on misbehaving and when I get a hold of you, you'll
 see that there is power somewhere! (i.e., I'll punish you!)

The yelling by the young man points to the fact that the boy's address form is wrong or inappropriate and is hence viewed as an anti-social act, an unspeakable or a kind of violation of the Akan communicative 'power structure'. It, in fact, also points to the fact that choosing the right terms of

address to use in a hierarchical organization is very important (Brown and Gilman 1960, 1972; Wardhaugh 1991: 263). Among the Akan, a wrong choice of address attracts a stern social rebuke.

This discourse also confirms the well-known fact (about all languages) that, much as language varies according to the social context in which an interactant finds himself, it also varies according to the speaker's age as well as his or her social class.

Moreover, we can infer from the discourse that social factors such as how a speaker talks to an elder or a superior, his co-equal and his subordinates lead to the use of different linguistic varieties. The social status of an interactant is an important feature of social context. Specifically, the social status of an addressee and in particular the role relationships and relative statuses of conversational participants help to shape the kind of language that can be used in the communicative situation.

Among the Akan, in a speech between individuals of unequal rank in status, like the one between the man and the boy quoted above, communicative rules regarding social class, age, sex as well as other social factors are strictly enforced. A laborer is most likely to address his boss as *Me Wura* ('My Lord', 'Sir' or 'Master') or use any deferential status marker. He will however, most certainly address his intimate friend or his equal by her surname or any name denoting solidarity. Brown and Ford (1961) report that in American English a person with a lower social status is most likely to address another with a higher status by his/her title and last name; the social superior will most certainly address the subordinate by his/her first name. Brown and Ford (1961) found age and occupational status as being the principal determinants of this non-reciprocal mode of address. I am told that surnames are acceptable in solidarity relationships primarily for children, adolescents, and working class males in Anglo-American society (although this may be changing in the wake of feminism.)

Proper use of hypocoristic forms helps to establish and maintain social relations. Thus, they constitute a great force of socialization. Among the Akan, intimates may begin their social interaction by addressing each other by their hypocoristic day-names followed by 'how are you'. The hypocoristic usage may thus be performed as a conversational opening.

The use of hypocorisms gives indication of the user's status and group allegiance. Thus, the use of a hypocoristic form depends largely on the statuses of the persons engaged in the interaction and whether or not they are familiar with one another. Improper use of hypocoristic forms can lead to friction or confrontation between interactants. A social inferior will under normal circumstances never address a respectable superior by his hypocoristic day-name unless such a name is prefaced with a deferential title like *Papa* ('father', i.e., someone you respect like your father), *Nana*

('elder'), *Agya* ('father', or a man with the same status as the speaker's father), *Braa* ('brother'), *Sista* ('sister'), *Ankl* ('uncle').⁴ It is important to note that even in such circumstances, the addressee's last name may be added after the hypocoristic form. Thus it is possible to hear a social inferior address a respectable superior as *Papa Koo Nimo*, *Agya Koo Gyasi*, *Braa Fiiifi Mensah*, *Ankle Joosi* or *Sista Baaba Otu*. Addressing a superior with a hypocoristic day-name without a proper deferential title, threatens the superior's face since people at the scene of the discourse could classify the addressee as a disesteemed superior. Such an act will also mar the speaker's face since s/he would be seen by the people as rude and disrespectful. S/he (the speaker) will therefore be blamed for any damage that may result from a confrontation brought about by the wrong use or misuse of the hypocoristic day-name.

It may therefore be argued that the 'rules' associated with the use of the hypocoristic form in a subordinate-to-superior situation receive social reinforcement. Any social inferior who addresses or refers to a respectable superior by his/her hypocoristic day-name is immediately reprimanded and classified as disrespectful. The use of the hypocoristic form in non-permitted contexts such as in public, provokes violent reactions of apparently very real shock and disgust. Such a reaction, is considered a reaction to the word and not to the hypocoristic concept. The usage of hypocoristic forms is not placed under a taboo; but their misuse or improper use is unacceptable in such a situation as the one described above.

It ought to be pointed out, however, that, an arrogant social inferior or a young rascal may knowingly break the rule governing the use of hypocoristic names to show his/her rebellion against society and authority or to attract attention to himself/herself. The action of such people may be referred to by society as *dwae* ('arrogance'), *ahomaso* ('pomposity'), and *soro* ('rascal'). People with such labels are not respected by society.

The 'rule' governing hypocoristic usage may be relaxed if the social superior is not respectable. Lack of respectability here relates to laziness and being uncouth (especially superiors who regularly use obscene language). After all there is an Akan proverb which says *Abea ommu ne ho na obetwani twa no nwunu* ('It's the unrespectable palm tree that is tapped while cold', i.e. an unrespectable person is treated without respect.). The Akan detest laziness and obscenity so anyone who 'bears' any of these attributes must be treated with contempt and disrespect.

Use of hypocoristic personal day-names is in order among equals, for instance, among persons⁵ of the same age-group or professional status. It must be pointed out that age is the most significant factor in determining whether or not a hypocoristic form may be used. A young person with a high socio-economic status who addresses a relatively older person with a lower

socio-economic status by his hypocoristic day-name will most certainly be seen by society as disrespectful.

Among equals, hypocoristic forms are the most common address forms. Hypocoristic forms used among equals mark solidarity or intimacy. In an informal conversational situation, an interactant who addresses his co-equal by his/her non-hypocoristic day-name may be seen as acting strangely. Specifically, such a person may be accused of acting as an 'outsider' rather than an 'insider'. Thus, a friend/co-equal who addresses me as *Koo Gyasi* or *Koo Ben* loves me more than, or is closer to me than, the one who addresses me as either *Kwadwo Gyasi* or *Kwadwo Obeng*. I am most likely to share my secrets with one who addresses me with my hypocoristic day-name than one who addresses me with any other name.

Among equals, therefore, a shift in the use of, say, a hypocoristic form to a non-hypocoristic form may signal a shift in the relationship between members of a social network. It is comparable to moving from a relaxed or casual to an unrelaxed or (semi)formal discourse environment. It could be an indication of the addressor having moved up in socio-economic status or having assumed the role of an 'adult' capable of advising the addressee when the addressee does something wrong.

Hypocoristic form usage in a superior-to-subordinate context is common. In fact, most adults, parents or older children may address or refer to younger children by hypocoristic forms. When hypocoristic forms are used in a superior-to-subordinate context, they express affective connotation, warmth, and the idea of being loved. A child addressed by his parents with a hypocoristic name (like *Fii* or *Fiiifi* instead of the non-hypocoristic form *Kofi*) will most certainly feel more loved by his parents than if the parents address him by *Kofi*. Thus, hypocoristic forms used in a parent-child context are, in terms of showing love, more preferable to non-hypocoristic forms.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have described the morphological and morphophonological processes encountered in hypocoristic day-name formation. A close and systematic scrutiny of the above discussion points to the fact that hypocorization is more pervasive in Fante than in the Twi dialects of Akan. An examination of Table 1 in Section 2, reveals that of the 45 hypocoristic forms given on the table, Fante uses 42 (93.33%). The other Twi dialects (Asante and Akuapem) use 14 (30.66%). Since hypocoristic usage marks status, its high occurrence in Fante could be an indication that among the Akan, the Fante are more conscious of status than the Twi.

This paper has also shed some light on the sociolinguistic relevance of hypocoristic forms. It can be said, without any exaggeration whatsoever, that the Akan, like other African peoples, are truly concerned about name choice or address forms in every single communicative context. When they employ hypocoristic forms, they are fully aware of the sociolinguistic implications. Names have significance for their users and strict rules govern their use or non-use. The avoidance of hypocoristic forms in certain communicative situations arises from the anxiety on the part of the users and referents about the proprieties and niceties of speech.

Use of hypocoristic forms, among equals, establishes, reinforces, and consolidates a social relationship. It connotes friendliness, intimacy, similarity, solidarity, and the idea of belonging to a social group. Using the non-hypocoristic form among equals is an indication of one being considered an outsider rather than an insider. This, by implication, suggests that members of a particular social network – age group or socio-economic status – must be aware of the norms that guide the appropriate sociolinguistic behavior so as to fit into the network. Among equals, the use of hypocoristic forms is reciprocal.

Where a difference of power or status or class association is involved in a meeting between two individuals, then the use of hypocoristic forms is non-reciprocal. A respectable superior can address a social inferior, if s/he chooses to, by his/her hypocoristic day-name. A social inferior, however, cannot address or refer to his/her superior by the superior's hypocoristic day-name unless it is prefaced by a deferential title, or unless the superior is unrespectable.

This study has contributed to knowledge about morphological markers of status. Like Brown and Gilman's (1960/1972) formal *Vous* ('deferential' you) versus familiar *Tu* ('intimate' you) pronominal address forms, we have learned that the usage of hypocoristic forms is governed by the pragmatics of 'power' and 'solidarity'. Specifically, whereas people with power can, without any difficulty, address a social minor by his/her hypocoristic day-name, people without power cannot address the powerful by their hypocoristic day-names without prefacing such address forms with a deferential title. We have learned that people who are intimate can use a reciprocal hypocoristic form. This study, like those of Lambert and Tucker (1976) and Bates and Benigni (1975), has therefore provided an insight into the fact that there is considerable variation in address form choice based on the background of the addressor and the addressee.

Moreover, this study bolsters Ervin-Tripp's (1972) assertion that age and socioeconomic status govern the non-reciprocal deferential address form. The difference between this study and Ervin-Tripp's work is that whereas she argues that occupational (socioeconomic) status supercedes age in

determining the mode of address in American English, in Akan age often supercedes occupational status.

Finally, a speaker who only knows an addressee's hypocoristic day-name but is unsure about his/her socioeconomic status or age will most certainly address him/her by prefacing the hypocoristic form with any of the deferential titles mentioned in the previous section.

In sum, it may be said that a study of hypocoristic formation and usage brings to light the relationship between language, culture, and sociolinguistics. Akan cultural and sociolinguistic rules regulate the speech and social behavior of interactants in their various communicative contexts. The speech behavior depends in part on such sociolinguistic factors as age, and socioeconomic status. Different day-name variants are used by interactants with different degrees of status. Moreover, there is a difference in the degree of politeness and deference as an interactant moves from one communicative and or social situation to the other. The phenomena of politeness and or deference are signalled sociolinguistically and this paper has shown how it works.

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Notes

1. My father is Gyasi but I was named after my father's aunt, who was Obenewaa – a feminine equivalent of Obeng.
2. Aday is an Akan traditional festival during which the gods and ancestors are remembered.
3. The vowel harmony rule in Akan dictates that in any Akan word of two or more syllables only vowels from one set of vowels (either +ATR, i.e., advanced tongue root vowels or -ATR, i.e., unadvanced tongue root vowels) should occur. For a vivid explanation of Akan Vowel Harmony see Dolphyne (1988).
4. English kinship terms like 'father', 'mother', 'sister', and 'uncle' are used as deferential titles in Akan.
5. The rules are the same for male–male, female–female, and male–female.

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Language choice in multilingual institutions: A case study at the European Commission with particular reference to the role of English, French, and German as working languages

CARSTEN QUELL

Abstract

The article first offers a framework for the analysis of institutional language choice which is then applied to the European Commission. It reviews efforts undertaken by some European governments to influence the linguistic realities in this institution. Results from a survey on actual language use and language policy preferences among those working in the European Commission are presented. The existing linguistic reality, the EU's formal legal requirements on language equality and the prospect of new member states and languages joining the EU are examined and future options for a viable European language policy explored.

1. Introduction

In 1958, at a time when the European Community was still in its infancy, the Council of Ministers adopted a document which was to become the basis of the linguistic functioning of the EC. Regulation No. 1 stipulated that Dutch, French, German, and Italian were the official and working languages of EC institutions. Through successive enlargements, the following languages were added to the original four: Danish and English in 1973, Greek in 1981, and Spanish and Portuguese in 1986. Since January 1995, Finnish and Swedish have been added, too, which means there are now 11 languages. All with the same status as official *and* working languages. Two important questions arise: firstly, to what extent is the official theory of the equality of all languages borne out by daily practice, and secondly, if a gap were found to exist between theory and practice, which opportunities for an efficient and just language arrangement exist? Most knowledge about language use inside EC institutions is based on personal observation. For example, Coulmas (1991) says that in the daily administrative dealings of the Community,