Forms of Address in Kabiye
A Shift to Borrowing Terms of Address among Younger Speakers in Togo

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This paper examines the use of foreign terms of address among younger speakers of Kabiye (Gur, spoken in northern Togo). Traditionally, the manner of addressing people is highly significant, sensitive in particular, to the speaker’s and the addressee’s comparative age and social status. Social status is defined by a passage through a sequence of initiations over a ten-year period. Formerly, one addressed all those of greater age and higher status with qadjə for men and qatɔtɔ for women. These terms continue to be used today in addressing those of far greater age and higher status.

However, they no longer are perceived as appropriate for addressing those older and higher in status than oneself, yet not as old and as high in status as one’s parents. With the advent of widespread Western education and close contact with Ewe (Kwa, spoken in southern Togo) many younger speakers address individuals with borrowed terms, e.g., frère, soeur, tanti (French via Ewe), fofovi, dadavi, atavi (Ewe) and sista (English via Ewe). The study shows that in the present Kabiye community, there is a shift in the use of terms of address from Kabiye to Ewe and/or Kabiye to French. I also show that the new terms of address from Ewe and French allow variation in the language within the Kabiye community.

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1. Introduction

For the purpose of this paper, I will define a form of address as “the portion of a speech act by which the speaker refers specifically and directly to the person or persons spoken to, [or written to], either by name or by substitute” (Kirk 1979: 29). When a person speaks to another, the selection of certain linguistic forms is governed by the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. In some languages, an individual’s social position is conveyed by the choice of the personal pronoun, and/or the corresponding verb form (e.g., Vous/Tu in French, Usted in Spanish). Cultural norms, values, and status can be reflected in an address system. In Kabiye an address term reflects the addressee’s social status which is defined by passage through a sequence of initiations.

One of the best known articles on the sociolinguistic approach to forms of address is “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity”, by Brown and Gilman (1960). This paper compares pronominal usage among Western European languages to discern the mechanism by which broad cross-cultural trends of changing attitudes, and values are reflected in linguistic change. They argue that non-reciprocal personal pronoun choice has given way, through time, to symmetrical ones, with the tu (T) form now being used by both interlocutors to indicate “solidarity” and the vous (V) form being used by both to indicate “social distance.”

The authors suggest that the importance of expressing status differences through pronoun usage (e.g., high status Vous, lower status Tu) has diminished in recent times relative to the importance of expressing degrees of solidarity. The shift, it is presumed, reflects basic changes in value systems (pp. 261–262).

Similarly, Brown and Ford (1964) and Lambert and Tucker (1976) have found that more subtle ways of expressing status differences are still frequently used, at least in American English. For instance, one person may address another by their first name and expect a title plus last name in return: “Is that you, Max?” “Yes, Mr. Adams” (Lambert & Tucker 1976: 84).

To the best of my knowledge, there have been no studies on terms of address neither on Ewe nor Kabiye in Togo. However, Larson (1962) describes the social and cultural organization of the Kabiye community and the importance given to such an organization.

1.1. Sociolinguistic background of Ewe and Kabiye

1.1.1. Ewe

Ewe is a Kwa language spoken by 862,000 people in the southern part of Togo and by 1,616,000 people in Ghana (Gordon 2005). Three million people (more than 65% of Togo’s population) use Ewe as a second language. Togo’s coastal population, speakers of
Ewe/Mina\(^1\), were the first to be in contact with Europeans. The early contact between Ewe speakers and the Europeans has increased its influence and especially prestige amongst other Togolese language.

Hence, the sociolinguistic role of Ewe in Togolese life has expanded in the post-independence period, and it has become a *lingua franca* among all ethnic groups and people of all backgrounds. Today, in everyday communication, I have observed that Ewe dominates in all forms of interactions among the different ethnic groups in Togo.

Historically, Lomé (the capital city) has always been the political, commercial, and educational center. It has thus exerted substantial influence on other regions of the country. Consequently, because it is the language used in Lomé, Ewe enjoys significant prestige when compared to other languages of other parts of the country. According to Kozelka (1984: 53), “either Ewe or Mina is understood, and can be used as a market language by approximately 60% of the population [of Togo].” Stewart (1968: 531) refers to Ewe as the “socially preferred norm of usage.”

1.2.2. Kabiye

Kabiye is a Gur language spoken by more than 800,000 people (Roberts 2002). It is spoken in the northern part of Togo, mainly in the prefectures of Kozah (Kara) and Binah. According to Lébikaza (1999), speakers of Kabiye represent 23% of the population of Togo.

The contact of Kabiye with Ewe during the colonial period was done through what was known as *la politique de la colonisation des terres* (Kao 1999). Today, many Kabiye speakers are settled in the southern part of the country due to migration. In this mainly Ewe-speaking area, Kabiye people have had to adapt themselves not only socially but linguistically as well.

Because Ewe has established itself as the main language of wider communication in everyday conversations in Togo (as stated above), it has become a symbol of westernization and modernity. As Guyot (1997: 78) observes,

> parler correctement le mina [Ewe] est déjà un signe perceptible d’intégration au monde ‘chic’ de la ville. Aussi les enfants de familles non autochtones (Kabiyès, Kotokolís, etc.) nés à Lomé, apprennent à parler cette langue urbaine. La langue devient éventuellement ensuite un moyen pour eux de prendre leurs distances vis à vis de leur origine ethnique, d’affirmer et de cultiver leur identité urbaine, de commencer une nouvelle vie loin du village\(^2\).

Furthermore, Guyot asserts that Ewe enables one “to affirm and cultivate one’s urban identity, [and] begin a new life far from the village.” As a result, there is daily pressure on

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1) Mina, also known as Gen or Gengbe, is a variety of Ewe (Kozelka 1984).
2) Speaking mina [Ewe] correctly is in itself a perceptible sign of integration into the ‘chic’ world of the city. Also, children of non native families (Kabiyè, Kotokoli, etc) who are born in Lome, learn to speak the urban language. This language then becomes a means of distancing themselves from their ethnic origin, affirming and developing their urban identity, and beginning a new life far away from the village (my translation).
urban Kabiye speakers to use Ewe because of its economic and social advantages. Today, there is an indication that Ewe is the primary language in the Kabiye community, particularly among the youth and urban dwellers.

It should however be noted that in 1975, the educational reform led the Togolese government to declare Kabiye and Ewe ‘national languages’ and the two languages were meant to be taught in schools. However, no concrete action was ever taken by the government toward implementing this reform.

1.2.3. French

At independence in 1960, French became the official language in the first Constitution of Togo, meaning that it is the sole language used in various government and administrative offices and institutions. French enjoys a special position in education because it is used as a subject of study besides being the only language of instruction in the whole of the educational system in Togo.

Officially, the use of French dominates in the media (e.g. radio, television, newspapers, etc.). However, in Togo, the strength of French lies more on the major functions it assumes than on the demographic weight of its speakers.

2. Giving or choosing names in Kabiye

Kabiye is an age-class society in which forms of address are based on traditional age groups. Names are given or chosen according to the different stages of social age groups. The society is divided into five main age groups which are marked by initiation ceremonies. The first male initiation in the Kabiye tradition occurs around the age of twenty and the fifth (and last) almost ten years later. Each initiation ushers a boy into a new grade-evalu, sangayu, esokpo, kond, and egulu—and confers on him a new status.

Traditionally, every Kabiye individual has three names. At birth, a child is given a name (N1), known as hidessoye (literally, big name). The non-initiated youngsters (between 13

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3) Below, I use N’1 to designate non-Kabiye first names (e.g., Komlan, Koffi, Paul, Marie, etc).
and 17) referred to as *pivelisi* (sg. *pivelua*) for boys and *pihalis* (sg. *pihalibua*) for girls, are addressed with *hidhesiye* until they are initiated. The first age group ranges between 17 to 19 for women and 18 to 20 for men. Each person in this group is initiated individually by the maternal uncle. The status of this age group is *evatu*, for men and *akpendu* for women. *Evatu* and *akpendu* are the most crucial statuses of the society because “ils forment la trame et la chaîne de l’espace civique; ... et font de chaque individu un citoyen appelé à défendre le territoire, et a participer à l’ordre des lois de la Cité” (Verdier 1982: 72). The initiated male is then referred to as *evalu* and the female as *akpenu*. Once an individual attains this status, he or she is now considered as mature and chooses a name (N2). N2 is commonly referred to as *evahide* and *akpeghide*, that is, the *evatu* name and *akpendu* name.

The second age group marks the beginning of adulthood. It occurs three and a half years after *evatu*. Membership of this group is known as *sangayetu* and an initiate is called *sangayu*. The *sangayu* then joins the third age group and becomes an *esokpo*. Three and a half years later, the *esokpo* is initiated and becomes a member of the fourth age group, *kondotu*. The initiate is referred to as *kondo*. This is the stage at which an initiate chooses another name of his own (N3). *Evatu* and *kondotu* are two important stages of the Kabiye initiation tradition because they are occasions at which the initiates choose their own names of life (N2 and N3). N3 is often a name of heroism or triumphs, for example in wrestling, hunting, or war. This name is referred to as *hidhesiye*, and can become one’s surname if the person decides not to maintain his/her father’s last name. Heroic names (N3) such as *nkazibu* ‘you’ll never die’, *nazingbe* ‘command and leave’ are very common (see Wardhaugh 1986, Evans-Pritchard 1948 for a similar chosen names among the Nuer community in Sudan). It is important to note that women do not take an N3, since they are limited only to the first initiation, *akpendu*. Finally, the last age group is attained two and a half years after *kondotu* and is known as *egulatu*. The initiate is called *egulu*. The class of *kondonaa* (plural of *kondo*) and *agulaa* (plural of *egulu*) together form the class of *sosaa*, that is, class of the old or people of wisdom.

Title names are not very common in the Kabiye tradition. Generally, title names refer to one’s function or work such as *williyu* ‘teacher’, *kolu* ‘goldsmith’, and *hadjtu* ‘farmer’. They are rarely used in face to face interactions. However, they can be used to refer to someone who is not part of the interaction.

Apart from these traditional ways of giving and choosing names, there are other forms of acquiring a name in Kabiye. *Hidhesiye* (N1) can be acquired according to the weekday of birth. So for example, a child born on *Hodo* (Monday) would be called Hodabalo, for a boy and Hodalo, for a girl. In the same way, a child born on *Piya* (Tuesday) or *Cila* (Wednesday) will be called Pyabalo/Pyalo or Cilabalo/Cilalo, etc., respectively for a boy and a girl.

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4) The maternal uncle, *egbele*, is the most important person in all initiation ceremonies in the life of a Kabiye (see section 4.1).

5) They form the web of life and the chain of civic space; ... and they make of every individual a citizen that is called upon to defend the Territory, as well as the law and order of the Country (my translation).
There are other forms of giving and choosing names that are not traditional Kabiye names. The contact of Kabiye with Ewe has led many Kabiye people to give Ewe names to their children according to the days of the week in Ewe. Hence, today, Ewe names like Komlan/Abla, Kofi/Ama, Kosi/Kosiwa, for boys/girls born respectively on blaða (Tuesday), fiq’a (Friday), and kosida (Sunday) have become very common among Kabiye speakers.

Similarly, the contact of Kabiye with the western world, especially Christianity has also influenced the Kabiye tradition of name giving. Many Kabiye people have acquired western Christian names such as Paul, Pauline, Pierre and Marie. I will refer to non-Kabiye names such as Ewe day names and Christian names as N’1 throughout the paper.

As stated above, age group is determined only by initiation. So a person A who was initiated before a person B would be considered older than person B regardless of biological age. They are equal if they are initiated in the same year. In this paper, the terms “old/older than”, “young/younger than” or even “age” will be used strictly in the traditional sense, with no reference to biological age, but rather referring to initiation rank. Further, “addressee” refers to someone older in this traditional sense than the addressor.

“Modern” social titles have also influenced the traditional social statuses in that the addressor takes into account the addressee’s modern status when addressing him or her. For example, even if a speaker is younger or the same age, a director of a company will not be addressed in the same way as an employee in the same company, due to the difference in their social statuses. The study focuses on this kind of asymmetric relationship in which younger speakers often hesitate as to which appropriate address term to use in addressing older people because misuse of name or title of address is considered rude in the society. But traditionally, older speakers can address younger speakers by any of their names.

3. Data collection

The data for this study were collected through individual and group interviews. Thirty native speakers of Kabiye took part in the interviews in Lomé, the capital city of Togo. There are fourteen males and thirteen females, aged between thirteen and twenty-five. All the informants are Kabiye speakers. Even though I tried to conduct the interviews mainly in Kabiye, I occasionally used French to make the interview more natural, and show that I was a member of the group (cf. St. Clair and Giles 1980). Here is an example where I had to use French to answer an informant’s question. When I met Djozo to set up a time for the interview, he asked me (interviewer) in Kabiye-French codeswitching:

Djozo:  Dimanche quelle heure n-goŋ ye? Sunday what hour you-come QP (question particle)

“What time are you coming on Sunday?”

Interviewer: Dix-sept heures-waa taa mbiyo.

“seventeen hours-PL in around

“Around five pm.”
My answer in French is triggered by Djozo’s question with time reference in French. My use of French is due to the fact that in everyday conversation, I will normally respond to this question in French, not in Kabiye. Hence, it is appropriate to do so during this interview in order to make the conversation natural. Furthermore, because the clock—with 24 hours—is Western, time expressions are likely borrowed from French when speaking Kabiye.

I supplemented the interviews with participant observations (Labov 1972). In each case, I presented a hypothetical situation to test the speakers’ system of address. For example, I asked my interviewees:

- How would you address the woman who gave you birth?
- How would you address the brother/sister of the person who gave you birth?
- How would you address a Kabiye older person at home or in the street—if that person is known or unknown?

In order to compare the results of use of address terms among younger people with that of older people, I sent out questionnaires to 15 older people aged between 45 and 70. The informants were made up of eight males and seven females.

The names of the interviewees quoted in this study are pseudonyms.

4. Kinship terms of address in the family

Two important competing cultural principles in Kabiye society are those of age and kinship status. ‘Age’ refers to one’s age reckoned according to the date of passage through evatu and akpendu. ‘Kinship status’ refers to one’s place in the kinship network and the rights and obligations pertaining to it. In Kabiye, kin statuses are almost always asymmetrical where one status is higher than the other. This asymmetry is reflected in language, specifically in the use of address forms. As Wardhaugh (1986) observes, when we use a language, we make use of the devices that the language employs to show certain relationships to other people and our attitudes toward them. Hence, depending on how we choose to address others, we can clearly but subtly indicate whether we consider them close associates or want to keep them at a certain social distance.

Kinship terms are terms for blood relations and for affines (Braun 1988: 9). As will be seen later, in the Kabiye society, the use of a kinship term goes beyond Braun’s definition of the term. Kinship terms occur not only in their central genealogical sense, but also as the designations of wider classes of kinsmen, and metaphorically in address to non-kin (e.g. dodo (lit. ‘our mother’), and dadja (lit. ‘our father’), used to address non-kin).

In a traditional Kabiye family, a married woman (without a child) is generally addressed by X-bel, (X stands for the name of her native village or town and -belo for ‘young woman’). For example, a married woman living in a region Y different from the region X she comes from is called Xbelo. A woman addresses her husband by his status chosen name, N2. For example, my father addresses my mother by Tcharebelo (my mother comes from
Tchare) and my mother addresses my father by his N2, ‘Essizewa’.

After a first child, the form of address can change between husband and wife. They will address each other by A+qo, for the woman and A+dja, for the man, (A stands for the name of the first child, the suffix -dja for ‘father’, and -qo for ‘mother’). So for example, Komlan’s mother will be addressed as Komlandqo ‘Komlan’s mother’ and his father by Komlanddja ‘Komlan’s father’.

In some families (particularly in Kara), I observed some women addressing their husband by mindja (lit. ‘my father’). The use of this term is related to the fact that traditionally a married woman considers her husband as her ‘protector’ in the same way she does to her real father. However, the reciprocal term monqo (lit. ‘my mother’) used by some husbands to address their counterpart is not as common as mindja, due to the traditional asymmetrical power relationship between husband and wife. As will be seen in section six, monqo and mindja can also be used derogatorily by couples whenever there is misunderstanding among them.

In general, parents address their children by their given names (N1) whatever their social status. Children address their father by caa and their mother by n’náa/nana. Similarly, they address their grandfather by caa or cozo and grandmother by n’naa. Younger children address their elder brothers by qaluu and elder sisters by koou. The latter address their younger ones by their given names.

Older members address a married woman by X+belo or A+qo, a married man by N2 or A+dja and younger members by their given names. Younger people address older male speakers by qodja ‘our father’ and female speakers by qoqo ‘our mother’. Younger speakers can also address couples with children by A+qo/dja. In order to show respect for elders, younger speakers would not use N1, N2, or N3 to address them.

Peer groups address each other either by given names, or by chosen names, N2. However, whenever they want to boast on their past social achievements, they use the heroic name, N3. Very often, peer groups (particularly those initiated in the same year) also address each other by tay ‘friend’ or more commonly, mindáu (lit. ‘my equal’, i.e. ‘friend’) as a sign of “solidarity” and “equality” (Brown and Gilman 1960).

4.1. The use of egbele

Another common kinship term in Kabiye is egbele ‘uncle’. According to Kabiye tradition, egbele refers only to one’s mother’s brother. In the same way, koou, maternal nephew or niece, also refers to the mother side. There is a special relationship between an individual and his/her egbele ‘maternal uncle’. This relationship is defined in Kabiye as egbele ne ékoou, that is, ‘uncle and nephew’. The status of egbele is privileged as reflected in the Kabiye saying, egbele tina eyu, ‘a person belongs to his/her uncle’. He is the person to decide on any of the initiations of his nephew or niece (see also Piot 1999). For example, the uncle initiates his nephew or niece to become evalu or akpenu. The close relationship between egbele and koou has also established a relationship of respect. Thus, a Kabiye individual shows great respect for his/her egbele, otherwise, maatōzij, “I will not initiate you,” a common joke from
uncles to their nephews. My own experience and observation of the Kabiye community is that the relationship between one’s uncle is far more stronger than with his/her niece. This special relationship between an egbele and koóu has also been observed by the community analyst, Larson (1963: 81) in these terms: egbele

“is the most highly respected man, even more than a man’s own father or father’s brothers. In the old days the mother’s elder brother had the right to sell his maternal nephew if he needed the money; and buy him back when he could. He had the right to pick a wife for his nephew and demand work from him. The nephew had to give him presents on numerous occasions. He could punish him as well as give advice and protection to his nephew.”

The main term used by Kabiye people to address their maternal uncle continues to be egbele. Almost all (26/27, 96%) of my interviewees report addressing their uncles by egbele. However, three informants reported that in addition to egbele, sometimes they also use oncle, and three others reported that they use egbele plus N1 or N’1. For example, egbele Paaluki/Paul, le yaóki? ‘Uncle Paaluki/Paul, where are you going?’

5. Terms for non-kinships

As is often the case in many cultures with regard to the use of terms of address, use of kinship terms for non-kin is a cross-linguistically common phenomenon. However, what is probably peculiar to the Kabiye case with regard to the use of kinship terms for non-kin is that the use is extended to other non-related languages in Togo, i.e., Ewe and French.

In Kabiye, there are five main non-kinship terms of address, dadja, qọọ, qaluu, koóu and tag ‘friend’. Dadja and qaluu ‘older brother’ are used to address older non-kinship males, whereas, qọọ and koóu ‘older sister’ are used to address older non-kinship females. Dadja and qọọ were traditionally kinship terms used to address all those of greater age and higher status. However, for curtsy and respect, they are also extended to non-kinship individuals when used in forms of address.

The terms are probably the nearest terms in meaning to the use of ‘power semantic’ of a non-reciprocal V form in the Western European society as defined by Brown and Gilman (1960). However, in Kabiye, the domains of use of dadja and qọọ are far more limited in that they are not pronouns as is the case for example, in French for Tu/Vous. There is no reciprocal use of dadja and qọọ and they do not shift to the status of Tu.

When dadja and qọọ are used to address somebody older than oneself, yet not as old as one’s parents, these terms are considered inappropriate by some informants. More than 70% of the informants reported that they do not often use dadja and qọọ because the terms are ‘old-fashion’ and appear to indicate that one is addressing akpadiyu, that is, ‘an old person’. Others reported that they do not like to be addressed by dadja and qọọ. This is probably due to the fact that the present westernized society rather considers the literal meaning
of the terms referring more to the idea of ‘oldness’ than of traditional social higher status.

Furthermore, I observed that nowadays some Kabiye speakers transfer the ‘power semantic’ V from French into Kabiye grammar as a term of address to show respect for a person of greater age or western social status. For example, students often use the plural subject pronoun in Kabiye, i- ‘you (pl)’ instead of the usual singular pronoun y- ‘you (sg)’ to address people older that oneself or of higher status. Thus, everyday greetings forms like:

\[
\text{dadj/\text{qof}o y-liwaale,} \quad \text{leé} \quad \text{y-woki?}
\]
\[
\text{dadj/\text{qof}o you (sg)-wake.up, where you (sg)-go}
\]

‘dadj/\text{qof}o, how are you, where are you going?’ have become nowadays:

\[
\text{dadj/\text{qof}o i-liwaale,} \quad \text{leé} \quad \text{i-woki?}
\]
\[
\text{dadj/\text{qof}o you (pl)-wake.up, where you (pl)-go}
\]

‘dadj/\text{qof}o, how are you, where are you going?’

In Kabiye, the plural pronoun subject -i ‘you (pl)’ is used only when there are more than one addressee. The current use of the plural pronoun in Kabiye to address a single person is a calque from the French V form (e.g. Comment allez-vous? “How are you (pl) doing?”). The use is currently penetrating other Kabiye speaking areas like villages where it was formerly not known at all. As one informant reports, “When I use the ‘V’ form in Kabiye to address older people in the village, I think they understand what I say, but sometimes they just laugh at me saying, ‘this is not what you say in Kabiye’.”

There is no doubt that the Kabiye language has complex address terms and, more importantly, it can be said that the contact with French and Ewe has greatly influenced the Kabiye language repertoire. In the present society, there is a dramatic “marginalization” of traditional terms of address among younger speakers because Kabiye terms show much more status difference between the speaker and addressee.

Another non-kinship term often used among age-mates is tay. The earlier discussion of Kabiye age grades makes the point that traditional Kabiye society is hierarchical. In traditional contexts, tay is used in Kabiye only among those who were initiated at the same period, i.e., among peers. But nowadays, the use of tay and non-Kabiye names (N’1) has become very common among friends, not simply among age-mates. As Wiyao, a twelve grade student states: “When I address someone older than me by his/her French or Ewe name, I do not feel it as rude as if I used a Kabiye name. I just think that foreign names are more neutral than Kabiye ones.” It can be inferred from Wiyao’s statement that the use of the N’1 (non-Kabiye first name) tends to reduce the hierarchical effect of ‘status’ or ‘power’, which the informants report to prefer compared to traditional names. This indicates that Kabiye and foreign terms do not have the same effect or connotation in usage.

Today, it has, therefore, become commonplace for Kabiye people to favor the use of tay or an N’1 in addressing one another, irrespective of age. Thus, the domain of use of tay has changed, shifting from its traditional use (for members of the same age group) to friends and co-workers. Hence, it appears that in the Kabiye community, solidarity has tended to
replace power in some cases, so that *tay* can be used in some relationships which previously had non-reciprocal usage (Wardhaugh 1986).

6. Address inversion

According to Braun (1988: 12), address inversion is the use of a kinship term in which the term “does not (as would be usual) express the addressee’s, but the speaker’s role in the dyad;” e.g., a mother addressing her son as *caa* ‘father/grandfather’ or a woman addressing her maid as *dofo*. Address inversion is used in many languages and cultures (cf. Braun 1988). In Kabiye, the use of address inversion can have two connotations. First, the kinship term is based on the traditional belief in reincarnation. Thus, in the case of *caa* for example, it is used as an identification of the son with the mother’s father or grandfather. A mother can therefore use *caa* to praise his son when he does something good as in: *Caa, ylabaaale, gyabaa maamu* (lit. “Thank you (grand)father, you saved me’, i.e. ‘My son, thank you for saving me’). Secondly, a kinship term can be used derogatorily. This often happens when a child does not behave well and a mother scolds at him/her with anger. For example, a mother can use the term *monfo* ‘my mother’ to address her daughter who insists on doing something she thinks right even though the mother believes it is not: *monfo pitike mbuu palaki* (lit. ‘My mother, this is not the way it is done, i.e. ‘You do not do it this way!’).

In the Kabiye community, I observed that address inversion is used more often by women than by men. The term *egulu* for example, is often used by women to signal their mood with their husband. When she is happy, she can address her husband as: *megulu mintisooli mbu* ‘My love, I don’t like that.’ But when she is in conflict with him, the connotation of *egulu* changes: *egulu mintisooli mbu* ‘You, I don’t like that!’ As can be seen, the use of the possessive pronoun *m-* prefixing *egulu* signals the good mood of the speaker. Its deletion signals anger on the part of the addressee (generally, a female speaker).

Address terms discussed above were traditionally used with the Kabiye community in accordance to one’s age group within the society. With greater mobility in modern days, Kabiye speakers have more difficulties to know other members of their peer groups. When the age group of the addressee is not known, the speaker faces a dilemma as to which traditional address term to use. As will be seen below, often, the speakers then rely on foreign terms.

7. New forms of address and language change

As stated earlier, the contact of Kabiye with Ewe and the western world has led Kabiye people to borrow new terms of address. Hence, the use of non-Kabiye names (N’1) like Komlan, Kofi, Ama, Paul, Pauline, etc., have become very popular address terms within the Kabiye community. Nowadays, the use of N’1 is common between husband and wife and particularly among younger members of the family and outside the family. The majority of informants I interviewed reported that N’1 tends to reduce the notion of ‘status’ or ‘power’
and is therefore preferred to traditional ‘hierarchical’ names. Interestingly, as with traditional Kabiye address terms, younger people cannot use N’1 to address older people.

This section discusses new terms of address that have been introduced in Kabiye, through the effect of language contact between Kabiye and Ewe on the one hand, and Kabiye and French on the other. Based on the results of the data, I show that in the present day Kabiye community, particularly among younger speakers, there is a shift in the use of terms of address from Kabiye to Ewe and French. I also show that the new terms of address allow variation in the language. Reports of common borrowed terms for kinships often used by junior and high school students in Kara are shown in Table 2.

The first column of the table marked ‘Kabiye’ indicates, in each case, the address term traditionally used by the addressee in addressing a person older than oneself. So for example, a younger speaker in a family would address his or her older brother by qaluu, and the older sister by koou. But nowadays, the younger brother can choose among others, the borrowed French terms frère, soeur or tanti, the English term sister transmitted via Ewe, or the Ewe terms fo, fofovi, fovi and da, davi, dadavi. Sometimes, these terms are accompanied by N’1 (e.g., fo/fovi-Komlan, da/davi-Mélanie). The use of non-Kabiye terms of address has now become very common in almost all forms of address among students. The table shows that qaluu and koou, as well as their borrowed equivalents do not refer only to one’s family members.

Table 2 indicates that despite a tendency towards new forms of address, Kabiye speakers do maintain the traditional rules of family cohesion by extending the same address terms to siblings, uncles, and parents’ cousins. For instance, traditional terms like qaluu and koou are used not only to address one’s elder brothers and sisters, but extended to cousins, paternal uncles and aunts. In other words, one’s relatives are addressed and treated in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Terms for kin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabiye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’naa/nana caa/cozo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’naa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaluu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaluu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egbele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the same way as one’s parents’ relatives and also to non-kin, although it is not the same in French. For example, during my interviews, almost all the informants addressed me either by Ewe terms: *fo-Komlan* or *fowi*, others or by French *(grand)frère*. Although I am not related to the informants, they extend family kinship terms to me as is the case in Kabiye. Furthermore, the borrowed terms also connote the idea of family cohesion and the notion of ‘respect for elders’, as is the case in Kabiye tradition regarding terms of address.

7.1. Results and analysis of kinship terms

The reported use of borrowed terms of address has become very common among the speakers I interviewed. There is no doubt that they have been influenced by Ewe and French. The general observation is that foreign terms of address tend to be used in a less rigidly hierarchical way. Specifically, they are invoked in instances where the addressee’s status is either (a) only slightly higher than the speaker’s, or (b) uncertain, relative to the speaker’s. Most of the informants report that borrowed terms of address do not have the same hierarchical effect as Kabiye ones, and therefore can be used when one wants to be less formal and traditional. Reported results on the use of kinship terms by the younger informants are presented in Table 3.

The results in Table 3 show a wholesale shift to French and Ewe terms. Only four kinship relations have retained their designations: *caa* (27/27, 100%), *cozo* (19/27, 70%), *n’naa* (25/27, 93%), *egbele* (26/27, 96%) and *koou* (24/27, 89%), respectively for grandfather, grandmother, maternal uncle and maternal nephew, are the Kabiye address terms whose use is reported most often by the informants. These terms are the least that have not been influenced by French and Ewe. The table shows that very few people use the borrowed forms of these terms, with only four out of twenty-seven (15%) and five out of twenty-seven (19%) using *grandpa* and *grandma* respectively.

The fact that grandparents receive Kabiye terms far more than parents may be explained by the fact that (a) grandparents are generally those who encourage their grand children to speak their language. Younger speakers, therefore, may like to address them with traditional terms, and (b) younger speakers do not like to be rude in addressing grandparents with unfamiliar foreign terms that the latter may not know.

Moreover, twenty-five out of twenty-seven informants (93%) report that they address their paternal nieces by the borrowed term, *tanti* (or *tanti* plus N’1), instead of the Kabiye term, *néy* (3/27, 11%). The informants also report using *egbele* and *koou* (25/27, 93%) in almost the same way, as both terms are not differentiated in the language. It is interesting to note that the results confirm the special relationship that exists between *egbele* and *koou* (see Larson 1963: 81). It is also clear from the table that in general the informants show a great deal of variation when addressing older relatives other than parents, grandparents, *egbele* and *néy*. To address these kin, 26 out of 27 informants (96%) report that they will use *ft+N’1*, as opposed to seven (26%) for the Kabiye term *qatuu*, ‘elder brother’. When we compare the reported use of Ewe terms and French terms, we notice that Ewe terms seem to be preferred for ‘elder brother’ over the French term *frère*. The latter is reported
higher in addressing an elder male cousin and paternal uncle (93%). The same observation for da+N’1 (93%) and davi (85%) over soeur (52%) for ‘elder sister’ against (89%) for elder female cousin and paternal aunt. Another observation from the reported address terms is that the informants seem to be consistent in the choice of the terms. Hence, an Ewe prefix is always followed an Ewe or French first name (e.g., fo-Komlan/Jean). No one reported doing so with a Kabiye first name, except with egbele, i.e. egbele+N’1 (e.g. egbele Jean). This can be explained by the fact that while for example, fo-Komlan is a common address form in Ewe, its Kabiye equivalent qaluu-Essowe is not in Kabiye. Thus, it would therefore be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kabiye</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Borrowed terms</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caa</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>7 (26)</td>
<td>papa</td>
<td>25 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’naa nana</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>6 (22)</td>
<td>maman</td>
<td>22 (81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (37)</td>
<td>dada</td>
<td>7 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caa cozo</td>
<td>grandfather</td>
<td>27 (100)</td>
<td>grandpa</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19 (70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’naa</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td>25 (93)</td>
<td>grandma</td>
<td>5 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaluu</td>
<td>elder brother</td>
<td>7 (26)</td>
<td>fo+N’1</td>
<td>26 (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fo</td>
<td>23 (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fofovi</td>
<td>18 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>frère</td>
<td>11 (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaluu</td>
<td>elder male cousin,</td>
<td>6 (22)</td>
<td>frère</td>
<td>25 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paternal uncle</td>
<td></td>
<td>fo+N’1</td>
<td>15 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fofovi</td>
<td>14 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fovi+N’1</td>
<td>12 (44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fovi</td>
<td>8 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>atavi</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>atavi+N’1</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
<td>elder sister</td>
<td>6 (22)</td>
<td>da+N’1</td>
<td>25 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>davi</td>
<td>23 (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
<td>elder female cousin,</td>
<td>6 (22)</td>
<td>soeur</td>
<td>24 (89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>paternal aunt</td>
<td></td>
<td>tanti</td>
<td>21 (78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>soeur+N’1</td>
<td>13 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dadavi</td>
<td>10 (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>da+N’1</td>
<td>7 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sista</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egbele egbele+N’1 egbele+N1</td>
<td>maternal uncle</td>
<td>26 (96)</td>
<td>oncle</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
<td>oncle+N’1</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
<td>maternal nephew/</td>
<td>25 (93)</td>
<td>neveu tanti N’1</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>niece</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nê</td>
<td>paternal niece</td>
<td>3 (11)</td>
<td>tanti</td>
<td>26 (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tanti+N’1</td>
<td>20 (74)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
odd to do so Kabiye with a Kabiye first name. Finally, the table also shows that qaluu and koou are extended to cousins, paternal uncles, and aunts. The results for women in this set of relatives parallels those for men, with the exception that soeur is reported higher for ‘elder sister’ than for frère ‘elder brother’.

Now I look at how Kabiye younger speakers address non-kin. Reported address terms commonly used by the students are presented in Table 4.

As observed in Table 3, Table 4 shows that qaluu and koou which were originally kinship terms have been extended to address non-kin. When using borrowed terms in the same setting, the informants report preference for tanti (27/27, 100%) over soeur (18/21, 67%), while only five out of twenty seven informants (19%) use madame, against 56% for qoluo. The speakers’ report also show that while sixteen informants (59%) report using monsieur plus last name, no one reports using madame plus a last name. I am not sure about this difference. However, I suspect that this is probably due to the fact that in Kabiye a woman is generally not referred to by her husband’s name but rather by (a) the name of her birthplace (e.g. Tcharebelo) and (b) the name of her first child (e.g. Komlandjo (see section 4 above).

Comparing Tables 3 and 4 we observe that when addressing a non-kinship individual, 18 out of 27 (67%) use qaluu ‘sir’, as opposed to only 6/27 (22%) for a family member. By contrast, 15/27 (56%) report using koou to address a non-kinship elder female cousin and elder sister. Similarly, to address a non-kinship female addressee, all the interviewees (27/27, 100%) claim to use tanti against 21/27 (78%) when the addressee is a member of the family. However, the use of frère is clearly lower (10/27, 37%) for non-kinship relationship than for kinship relationship (25/27, 93%), an indication of a close family relationship.

My own observation of the Kabiye community is that women use Ewe terms more often in addressing people than men (see also Tarro (2009) for a similar viewpoint). This can be explained by the fact than in Kabiye society, women have a longer tradition of contact with the outside world (e.g., through market and other forms of business activities) than men do. Consequently, they have more exposure to Ewe through their daily activities than

### Table 4. Terms for non-kin (n=27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kabiye</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Borrowed terms</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qaluu</td>
<td>sir</td>
<td>10 (37)</td>
<td>grand frère</td>
<td>14 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 (67)</td>
<td>monsieur</td>
<td>17 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>monsieur-X</td>
<td>15 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qoluo</td>
<td>madam</td>
<td>6 (22 )</td>
<td>tanti</td>
<td>27 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (44)</td>
<td>madame</td>
<td>11 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koou</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td>15 (56)</td>
<td>soeur</td>
<td>18 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>madame</td>
<td>5 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tan</td>
<td>friend</td>
<td>18 (67)</td>
<td>first name (N’1)</td>
<td>15 (56)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X stands for family name.
men. Hence, Kabiye women have responded to the social norm (prestige) associated with Ewe within their community. A number of studies have shown that women tend toward more prestigious forms of the language while men toward more informal or non-prestigious forms (Trudgill 1984, Gal 1979, Labov 1972). Furthermore, it is the female speakers and the youth who act as the avant garde in the spread of Ewe into the Kabiye community (Essizewa 2006b). This is however not the case with French terms which men use more than women, as it is acquired mainly through formal education\(^6\).

Another observation is that the informants report using foreign terms more frequently to address non-kinship individuals than family members. In other words, French and Ewe terms are invoked outside and abandoned inside. This confirms Essizewa’s (2006b) finding that the use of Ewe and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching in Kara is reported higher outside the family than in the family. We can possibly explain this by the fact that younger speakers do not want to sound rude with older parents particularly grandparents who might not speak Ewe or French. Furthermore, Kabiye kinship terms are peculiar to the Kabiye language. French and Ewe equivalents do not have the same cultural effect or impact and cannot fully express and connote that aspect of peculiarity to Kabiye. While Kabiye society is very hierarchical, the western societies are much less hierarchical. ‘Westernized’ Kabiye speakers are therefore trying to reconcile the two cultural systems in their daily forms of address.

My observation and the reports above appear to indicate that the informants have maintained the use of a few Kabiye address terms while shifting the majority of others to Ewe and French. Those referring to grandparents (caan, caza and n’naa) and the maternal uncle (egbele) are very strongly maintained. These terms do not have as many variations as the other terms because they constitute what is known in the language as kabiye*ede/hila, i.e. the root or lineage of Kabiye names, and therefore, are preserved to a greater extent.

Overall, Tables 3 and 4 indicate that for a given borrowed term of address, the informants seem to show preference for Ewe terms over French ones. A possible explanation is that naturally, contact between Kabiye and Ewe tends to be much more intimate and signals solidarity among the speakers, in a way different from contact between Kabiye and French which is foreign. But the question is to know why Kabiye speakers borrow from French and Ewe.

It appears that many reasons underlie the use of borrowing kinship terms from French, and particularly, Ewe. Both languages are considered prestigious. French is the language of upward mobility, a status that gives it heightened prestige in Togo. More importantly, Ewe is the lingua franca in Togo. Ewe is also a language of wider communication, not only in Togo, but also in the neighboring countries i.e., Ghana and Benin. According to Kozelka (1984), Ewe is understood, and can be used as a market language by approximately 60% of the population of Togo\(^7\). Stewart (1968: 531) refers to Ewe as the “socially preferred norm

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\(^6\) Although nowadays many parents understand the importance of educating girls, in general, parents are more likely to invest more for the education of boys than of girls.

\(^7\) See also Afeli and Lébikaza (1992) for similar viewpoints.
Table 5. Terms for kin used by older speakers (n=15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kabiye</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Borrowed terms</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caa</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>10 (70)</td>
<td>baba</td>
<td>5 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n’naa/nana</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>13 (87)</td>
<td>dada</td>
<td>2 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egbele</td>
<td>maternal uncle/nephew</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neŋ</td>
<td>paternal niece</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaluu</td>
<td>older brother, paternal uncle, nephew</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koʊu</td>
<td>elder sister, elder female cousin, paternal aunt</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cozo</td>
<td>grandfather</td>
<td>15 (100)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of usage” [in Togo]. As one market woman observes, “If you speak Ewe, you can do business everywhere, especially in Lome⁸, because it is the language of the market, that is, in English, the ‘business’ language” (Essizewa 2002: 23).

Schools have contributed in many ways to the spread of Ewe in Kara in recent years. I observed the use of Ewe on school compounds and in some families as well. One teacher in Kara told me that the use of Ewe in the schools in Kara dramatically increased as a consequence of the political crisis from 1990. Schools were closed in Lome and other cities and towns in the southern part of the country for almost a year, due to what was politically known as “grève générale illimitée” (unlimited strike). As a result, many Kabiye parents in Lome chose to send their children to Kara and other places in the northern part of the country where the crisis and strike were not as intense as in the south, and schools were still running. Consequently, the use of Ewe has spread at a higher pace not only in schools but also within families, because in most cases, Ewe-speaking mothers moved north with their school-age children. Many children who did not speak Ewe before acquired Ewe through their interaction with these Ewe-speaking children (Essizewa 2006a: 150–151).

In order to compare younger speakers’ results to that of older speakers, I interviewed 15 older speakers on the use of terms of kin in the Kabiye community. The results are presented in Table 5 below.

The results overwhelmingly show that older Kabiye speakers rarely use borrowed terms for kin when addressing family members. Specifically, the reports show that core kinship terms like egbele ‘maternal uncle, nephew’, neŋ ‘paternal niece’, qaluu ‘older brother, paternal uncle, nephew’, koʊu ‘elder sister, elder female cousin, paternal aunt’, and cozo ‘grandfather’ have been maintained in Kabiye with no influence at all from neither Ewe nor French. However, five old speakers (four females against one male) reported using sometimes the Ewe borrowed term baba⁹ instead of caa ‘father’ and only two of them (all females) reported using dada instead of n’naa or nana ‘mother’. The use borrowed kinship terms by older female speakers corroborates my observation and statement in section (7.1) regarding the use of foreign kinship terms among Kabiye speakers in general. Furthermore,

⁸) Lome is the capital city of Togo and majority Ewe-speaking city.
⁹) While younger speakers use papa for ‘father’, older speakers use baba. In traditional Kabiye, the sounds /p/ and /b/ are often considered as allophones (e.g., the name Paluki and Baluki, meaning ‘They do not forge’ refers to the same person where the prefixes pa-/ba- stand for the pronoun ‘they’.)
older speakers reported that their use of kinship terms for non-kin is practically the same as those for kin in most forms of address.

The fact that older speakers maintain Kabiye terms of address reflects their role as keepers of the Kabiye tradition since they are often those who encourage younger speakers to speak Kabiye (cf. Essizewa 2006b). The results in Table 5 corroborate my observations in the Kabiye community with regards to the use of kinship terms among older speakers.

The data seem to show that socially the new terms of address have brought the relationship between the speaker and the addressee closer than with the use of traditional ones. On the surface, the use of French and Ewe terms seem to reduce the power dynamic, as some informants reported in using them. But, Kabiye is a very hierarchical society and the use of French and Ewe terms has not reduced its powerful hierarchical status. We can say that Kabiye terms are peculiar to the language, and therefore, culturally interlinked. Foreign equivalents do not connote the same cultural peculiarity of the language. This is the reason why some informants report using borrowed terms in settings of less formality, for example, with friends. Because French and Ewe terms are considered prestigious, speakers use them to gain or even increase their own prestige (see also Kamwangamalu 1989 for a similar observation in Zaire, present Democratic Republic of Congo).

Before I conclude, I would like to point out that, there are inevitably some limitations in this study. A wider range of informants including those from rural areas as well as those without western education might provide different results. Formal education can affect the results by the fact that in general people with little or no formal education tend to live in rural areas and have less contact with strangers and with other languages. This means that their use of French and Ewe terms could be limited.

Despite some of these flaws, I can argue that the data provide evidence as to the inroads of foreign address terms into Kabiye, particularly among younger speakers.

8. Conclusion

The study has shown that younger respondents report using borrowed terms of address more often than Kabiye ones, an indication that Kabiye address terms are undergoing a change. This process is in fact what Chisanga (2000) refers to as a natural propensity for languages to acquire new characteristics in order to meet changing circumstances. I argue that the current sweeping adoption of foreign terms into Kabiye system of address among younger speakers is the result of instrumental value of Ewe and French in the ‘market place’ (Calvet 1992) in Togo.

Despite the influx of French and particularly Ewe terms of address, it is interesting to note that an important element is maintained: “respect for elders” and an apparent cohesion of the family link. Almost all of the family terms have been extended metaphorically to non-family. This is contrary to what has been observed in some African languages that are undergoing similar social changes (e.g., Bemba in Zambia, Chisanga 2000). In this language, Chisanga noticed that as more and more English terms are borrowed into
Bemba, speakers epitomize values associated with English at the expense of Bemba family relationships. This seems not to be the case for Kabiye, since the use of the French terms, frère or soeur, or Ewe terms fo/fovi*N’1 for example, go beyond their traditional French and Ewe meaning, having been adapted to Kabiye societal patterns. In fact, borrowed terms do not change their Kabiye equivalents’ meaning. This means that power hierarchy and family cohesion are still very much part of the Kabiye social structure, and it would be surprising if all traces of their effect were quite suddenly to vanish in the near future.

References


*Reception—25 March 2010*