

Analysing the Structure of Proper Names Used as Vocatives in English under the Systemic Functional Linguistics Model

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Abstract: This paper analyses the structures of English proper names which are used as vocatives under the SFL (systemic functional linguistics) model. The procedure of analysis is as follows: first, viewing previous literature offers a chance to refer to plenty of examples of vocatives while providing a theoretical basis for this research. Second, most examples used in this paper are proposed by an English native speaker and the author together. This native speaker is qualified to cover the most common uses of vocatives considering his experience of saying vocatives to others and hearing them from others. Third, the method of attesting to some relatively uncommon usage is that the author comes up with a potential structure first and then searches for real-world examples that can support that assumption in trustworthy sources such as specific corpora and public speech. Therefore, although this may be a preliminary analysis, leaving issues that require further discussion, hopefully, this work will prove a step forward in this under-researched area.

Keywords: proper name, vocative, systemic functional linguistics

1. Introduction

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic model focusing on the relationship between language and social structure [1]. Given the trend of more comprehensive and detailed academic development, many studies focusing on lower-ranking grammatical units have appeared using the SFL model, including nominal groups in Sundanese, Tagalog, Lhasa Tibetan and Khorchin Mongolian, for example [2][3][4][5]. However, those mainly focus on common nouns and proper names have yet to be discussed much. In fact, some scholars consider names as a marginal type of linguistic item outside the core of theoretical linguistics [6]. Vocatives are also thought to occupy a marginal role in grammar in traditional linguistics [7]. Moreover, proper names used as vocatives are claimed to have no influence on other parts of grammar [8]. Poynton noticed this research gap of vocatives realised as names in unique forms, which inspired me [7]. Therefore, this paper contends that the descriptions of the structure of system proper names used as vocatives are crucial, based on the idea in SFL that various grammatical choices are closely tied to interpersonal functions which is one of the three semantic components [9].

The following parts of this paper will first lay out some backgrounds for the later analysis by introducing the theoretical framework and previous studies. Applying the research process explained above, the main results are given as follows, with some discussions regarding the limitation of this

paper and suggestions for future research. Finally, the contributions of the thesis will be reviewed, and conclusions will be given.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1.SFL

Focusing on the social role of languages during the process of exchanging meaning, the linguist M A K Halliday described language as a semiotic system and proposed and developed the internationally influential model of SFL which treats lexicogrammar as an integral subsystem realising semantics "transparently" and naturally. In the sense of semantics, the grammar reflects the context in three dimensions which share three metafunctions respectively: field referring to the content of a text is about ideational function, tenor referring to the social relation between the interactants is about interpersonal function and mode referring to the role the language is playing is about textual function [9]. Involving these three configurations and metafunctions, SFL centres on meaning and relates both context and forms and thus developed a distinctive model of stratification: context, semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology/graphology, and phonetics [10]. The relationship between strata is one of the realisations [11]. The choices of the lower stratum construe choices of the higher stratum, and choices of a higher stratum activate choices of a lower stratum, and different strata form the system as a whole to construct the meaning [9]. Thus, the metafunction and stratification work in tandem to construct the total semiotic system of language and context which has an internal organisation recognising the rank at each stratum and following the axis principle [9]. Axial relations are further investigated as the system-structure relation, focusing on how systems are motivated by and realised through structural configurations and represented in networks.

Therefore, small systems like the proper name could be described following this model [12]. In previous studies, to describe nominal groups, the word function and word class are mainly considered: the word function explains the role played by a unit in the clause and word class is about the different roles a unit plays in different structures. Word classes realise word functions. The relationship between is not one-to-one; in other words, one word function could be realised by different word classes, and one word class could realise different word functions so both function and class are essential in describing structures [13].

2.1.2.Proper Names and Vocatives

As is well known, a proper name is a noun or a noun phrase that uniquely identifies a particular person, place or object. One common use of the proper name specifying the person expected to respond in speech moves is identified as the vocative [14]. Martin and Rose illustrate that according to the mode of exchange, there are two different types of conversing where vocatives are used: one is negotiating, concerned with the interaction between speakers in dialogue about three dimensions – whether information or goods-and-services are being negotiated, whether speakers are giving or demanding it, and whether the speech move initiates or responds to it, and the vocative accompanies the speech to address its receiver; another is attending, a distinct speech act to greet or call the receiver to only get attention without any extra content to be negotiated, realised by the vocative itself [14].

2.2. Practice

As for the form of vocatives, Poynton discusses in detail names at word rank and word complexes consisting of only names excluding title and modification [7]. Firstly, the name distinguishes two

types: the real name including the given name freely chosen for an individual and the family name (the inherited name in this paper) passed down from parent to child, and the nickname which is any hypocoristic form of an item used as the name, including diminutive, familiar, or pet forms. Second, the composition of names could be simple or complex, and a complex form has three structures: recursive given names, one given name plus one family name, and recursive given names plus the family name (full name). Especially note that this paper will adopt the structure of the name complex: the given name is the α and the inherited name is the β in the name complex when adults in 'private' contexts and children in most contexts prefer to present their personal name without the family name; the inherited name is the α and the given name is the β when the family name is stated with an optional preceding or following given name in 'public' contexts. Moreover, Poynton presents a new technique of giving values to familiar terms for expressing intimacy in a particular relationship by the vocative, which is identified as the endearment class in this paper [7]. Also, Poynton's 'recursion' of the sequence of attitudinal modifiers is identified as recursive Attitude functions in this paper [7].

Quirk and others identified a series of categories of vocatives, including Names, Standard appellatives, Terms for occupations, Epithets, General nouns, Personal pronouns or Indefinite pronouns, Nominal clauses and expanded items [15]. Poynton takes the idea from Halliday and Quirk and others to consider vocatives as nominal groups and adopts the functions in nominal groups: Deictic, Numerative, Epithet, Classifier, Thing and Qualifier, to describe vocatives [16] [17] [15]. Also, he further establishes various structures of vocatives: single item forms with no (apparent) internal structure, including the pronoun, first or last name, deference or respect title, occupational identifier, and unmodified general noun; compound/word complex/appositive structures, including the full name, title (ordinary, family relationship or occupational) + name, endearment + name, and general noun complex; and modifier + head structures of varying levels of complexity (the Epithet function can be recursive), including Deictic + Thing, Epithetⁿ + Thing, Deictic + Epithet + Thing, and Deictic + Epithet + Classifier + Thing [16].

3. Results

To answer the research question of how to describe the structure of English proper names as vocatives in the SFL model (excluding nominal group complexes like special agent Thomas), word functions for different uses of the word in a proper name and word classes for different types of words realising word functions are mainly used. Overall, different word functions in English proposed are outlined in Table 1, and word classes are in Table 2.

Table 1: List of word functions.

Word Function	Example
Attitude	<i>dear, respected, lovely, sweet, stupid, fucking, esteemed</i> [18], <i>proud</i> [18], <i>squirming</i> [18], <i>devoted</i> [18], <i>wet</i> [18]
Title	<i>Professor; Sir; Miss; Uncle; Honour</i>
Appellation	<i>Professor; Sir; Mr President; Uncle; Sharon Fraser; Clancy; Thomas; Tommy; Winky; darling; idiot</i>
Affection	<i>dear</i>
Distance	<i>my, you; your</i>

Table 2: List of word classes.

Word Class	Example
disposition	<i>dear, respected, lovely, sweet, stupid, fucking, esteemed [18], proud [18], squirming [18], devoted [18], wet [18]</i>
respect	<i>Professor, Doctor</i>
courtesy	<i>Sir, Madam</i>
politeness	<i>Miss, Mr</i>
kin	<i>Uncle, Sister, son</i>
reverence	<i>Honour, Highness, Majesty</i>
inherited name	<i>Clancy, Fraser</i>
given name	<i>Thomas, Sharon, James</i>
diminutive	<i>Tommy, Jimbo</i>
nickname	<i>Winky, Horse</i>
endearment	<i>darling, dear, sweetheart</i>
derogation	<i>idiot, bastard, asshole, sucker</i>
non-possessive pronoun	<i>you, youse, you-all</i>
possessive pronoun	<i>my, your, her, his</i>

3.1. Negotiating

Possible structures used in negotiating in English are listed below:

1) +Appellation;

Appellation: respect/courtesy/kin/respect complex: β^{α} , α : respect, β : politeness/given nameⁿ/diminutive/nickname/endearment/derogation

(Eg: *Professor, Sir, Uncle, Mr President, Thomas, Tommy, Winky, darling, idiot*)

2) +Appellation; +Affection;

Appellation: given name/diminutive/nicknameⁿ^Affection: endearment

(Eg: *Winky dear*)

3) +Attitudeⁿ; +Appellation;

Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Appellation: respect/courtesy/kin/respect complex: β^{α} , α : respect, β : politeness/given nameⁿ//diminutive/nickname/endearment/kin/derogation

(Eg: *dear respected Professor, dear Sir, dear Uncle, dear Mr President, dear sweet Thomas, dear sweet Tommy, dear sweet, Winky, dear lovely son, stupid fucking idiot*)

4) +Attitudeⁿ; +Title; +Appellation;

Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Title: respect/politeness ^ Appellation: inherited name/name complex: β^{α} , β : given nameⁿ, α : inherited name

(Eg: *dear respected Professor Clancy, dear respected Ms Sharon Rose Fraser*)

5) +Attitudeⁿ; +Title; +Appellation;

Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Title: kin ^ Appellation: given nameⁿ

(Eg: *dear Uncle Fred*)

6) +Distance; +Appellation;

Distance: possessive pronoun ^ Appellation: endearment/kin

(Eg: *my son*)

7) +Distance; +Appellation;

Distance: non-possessive pronoun ^ Appellation: derogation

(Eg: *you idiot*)

8) +Distance; +Attitudeⁿ; +Appellation;

Distance: possessive pronoun ^ Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Appellation: respect/courtesy/kin/respect complex: β^{α} , α : respect, β : politeness/given nameⁿ/diminutive/nickname/endearment/kin

(Eg: *my dear respected Professor*, *my dear Sir*, *my dear Uncle*, *my dear Mr President*, *my dear sweet Thomas*, *my dear sweet Tommy*, *my dear sweet Winky*, *my dear lovely baby*, *my dear lovely son*)

9) +Distance; +Attitudeⁿ; +Appellation;

Distance: non-possessive pronoun ^ Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Appellation: derogation

(Eg: *you stupid fucking idiot*)

10) +Distance; +Attitudeⁿ; +Title; +Appellation;

Distance: possessive pronoun ^ Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Title: respect/politeness ^ Appellation: inherited name/name complex: β^{α} , β : given nameⁿ, α : inherited name

(Eg: *my dear respected Professor Clancy*, *my dear Ms Sharon Rose Fraser*)

11) +Distance; +Attitudeⁿ; +Title; +Appellation;

Distance: possessive pronoun ^ Attitudeⁿ: disposition ^ Title: kin ^ Appellation: given nameⁿ

(Eg: *my dear Uncle Fred*)

12) +Distance; +Title;

Distance: possessive pronoun ^ Title: reverence

(Eg: *Your Honour*)

13) +Title; +Appellation;

Title: respect/politeness ^ Appellation: inherited name/name complex: β^{α} , β : given nameⁿ, α : inherited name

(Eg: *Professor Clancy*, *Ms Sharon Rose Fraser*)

14) +Title; +Appellation;

Title: kin ^ Appellation: given nameⁿ

(Eg: *Uncle Fred*)

The overall system of negotiating in English is shown in Figure 1.

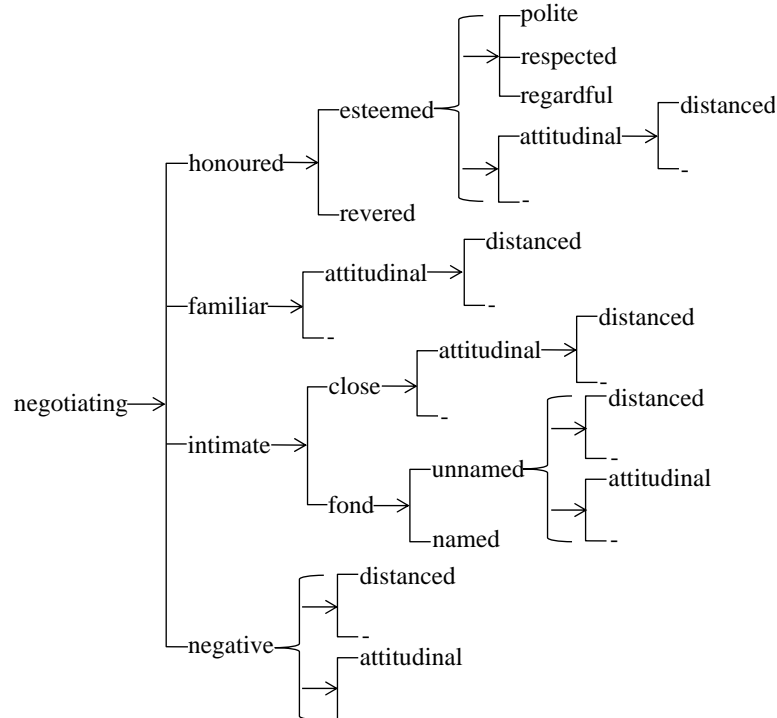


Figure 1: Negotiating system.

1) [honoured]

1.1) [honoured]-[esteemed]

The realisation includes the final Appellation function realised by different classes distinguished according to further features.

1.1.1) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[polite]

This is realised by only the Appellation function realised by the respect, courtesy, kin class, or the β^α respect complex in which α is the respect class and β is the politeness class.

1.1.2) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[respected]

This is realised by the Appellation function and the preceding Title function. The Title is realised by the respect or the politeness class, and the Appellation is realised by the inherited name class or the β^α name complex in which β is the repeatable given name class and α is the inherited name class.

1.1.3) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[regardful]

This is realised by the Appellation function and the preceding Title function. The Title is realised by the kin class, and the Appellation is realised by the repeatable given name class.

1.1.4) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[polite]/[respect]/[regardful]+[attitudinal]

This dispensable [attitudinal] feature is realised by including the preceding-the-Appellation Attitude function which is realised by the disposition class, and there can be a sequence of more than one Attitude.

[honoured]-[esteemed]-[polite]/[respect]/[regardful]+[attitudinal]+[distanced]

This dispensable [distanced] feature is realised by the initial Distance function which is realised by the possessive pronoun class.

1.2) [honoured]-[revered]

This is realised by the Distance function which is realised by the possessive pronoun class, and the following Title function which is realised by the reverence class.

2) [familiar]

2.1) [familiar]

This is realised by the Appellation function which is realised by the repeatable given name class.

2.2) [familiar]+[attitudinal]

This dispensable [attitudinal] feature is realised by the preceding-the-Appellation Attitude function which is realised by the disposition class, and there can be a sequence of more than one Attitude.

2.3) [familiar]+[attitudinal]+[distanced]

This dispensable [distanced] feature is realised by the initial Distance function which is realised by the possessive pronoun class.

3) [intimate]

The realisation includes the Appellation function realised by different classes distinguished according to further features.

3.1) [intimate]-[close]

3.1.1) [intimate]-[close]

This is realised by the final Appellation function which is realised by the nickname or diminutive class.

3.1.2) [intimate]-[close]+[attitudinal]

This dispensable [attitudinal] feature is realised by the preceding-the-Appellation Attitude function which is realised by the disposition class, and there can be a sequence of more than one Attitude.

3.1.3) [intimate]-[close]+[attitudinal]+[distanced]

This dispensable [distanced] feature is realised by the initial Distance function which is realised by the possessive pronoun class.

3.2) [intimate]-[fond]

3.2.1) [intimate]-[fond]-[unnamed]

This is realised by the final Appellation function which is realised by the endearment or kin class.

3.2.2) [intimate]-[fond]-[unnamed]+[distanced]

This dispensable [distanced] feature is realised by the initial Distance function which is realised by the possessive pronoun class.

3.2.3) [intimate]-[fond]-[unnamed]+[attitudinal]

This dispensable [attitudinal] feature is realised by the preceding-the-Appellation Attitude function which is realised by the disposition class, and there can be a sequence of more than one Attitude.

3.2.4) [intimate]-[fond]-[unnamed]+[distanced]+[attitudinal]

The realisations are as above.

3.2.5) [intimate]-[fond]-[named]

This is realised by the Appellation function followed by the Affection function. The Appellation is realised by the given name, diminutive or nickname class, and the Affection is realised by the endearment class.

4) [negative]

1.1) [negative]

This is realised by the final Appellation function which is realised by the derogation class.

1.2) [negative]+[distanced]

This dispensable [distanced] feature is realised by the initial Distance function which is realised by the non-possessive pronoun class.

1.3) [negative]+[attitudinal]

This dispensable [attitudinal] feature is realised by the preceding-the-Appellation Attitude function which is realised by the disposition class, and there can be a sequence of more than one Attitude.

1.4) [negative]+[distanced]+[attitudinal]

The realisations are as above.

Developed from Figure 1 above, the whole negotiating system network is detailly outlined in Figure 2 below, with illustrative sentences (in red italics) and examples of proper names (in blue italics). Note that '[' means to include different features at different hierarchies of the delicacy, '{' means to select one or more features at the next hierarchy of delicacy, '-' indicates that the selection is dispensable, '↘' suggests the functions as realisations of features, '+' indicates the existence of different functions, '^' suggests the sequence of different functions, '#' means zero functions in that position, '.' means the order of functions could be in order or reverse order, ':' explains realisations of functions by different classes, '/' means another option of class as realisation, and 'n' suggests repeatable word classes.

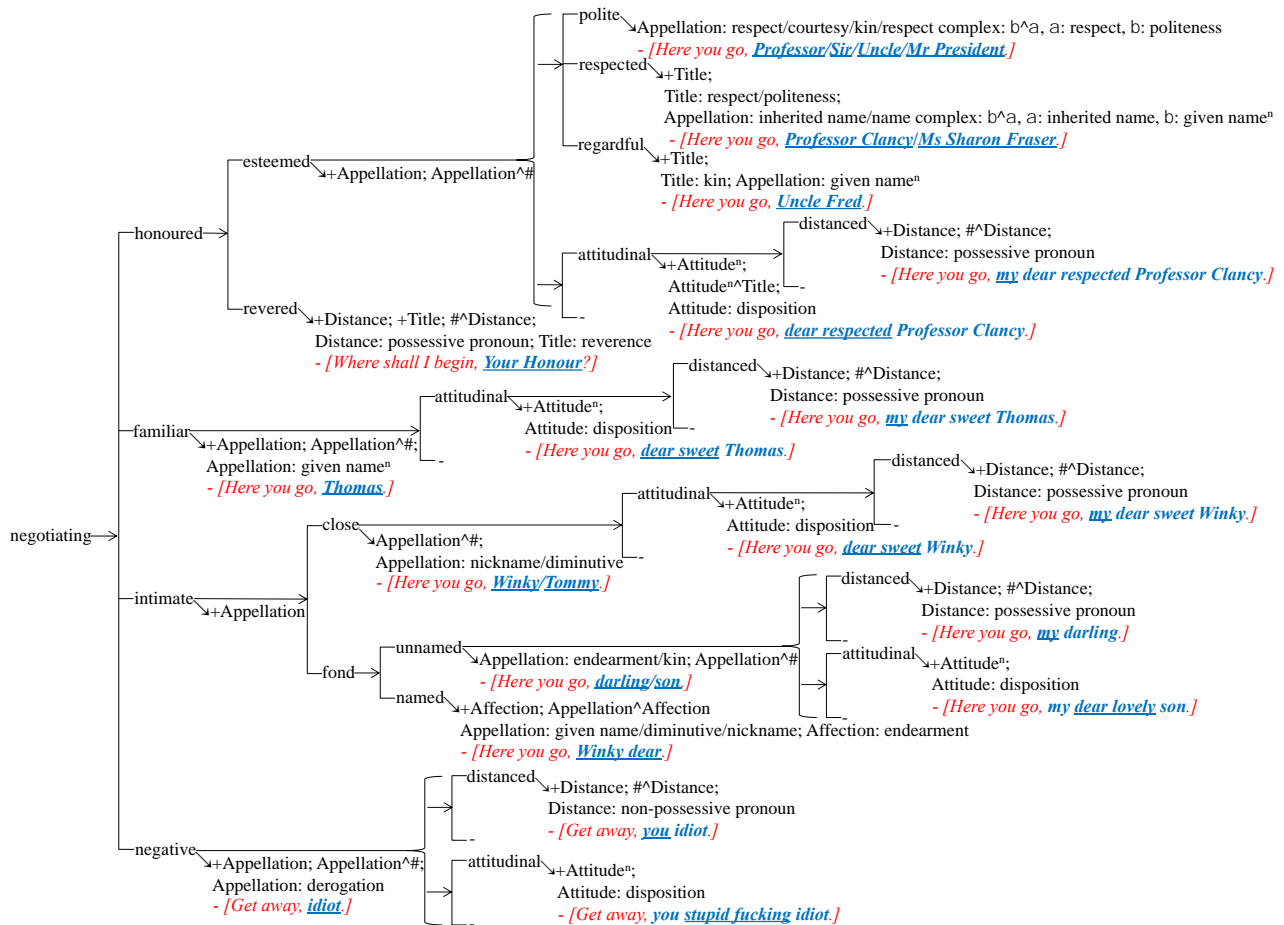


Figure 2: Detailed negotiating system network with illustrative sentences and examples.

3.2. Attending

Possible structures used in attending in English are listed below:

1) +Appellation;

Appellation: respect/courtesy/kin/respect complex: $\beta^{\wedge}\alpha$, α : respect, β : politeness/name complex: $\alpha^{\wedge}\beta$, α : given nameⁿ, β : inherited name/given nameⁿ/diminutive/nickname/endearament/derogation
(Eg: *Professor, Sir, Uncle, Mr President, Sharon Rose Frase, Thomas, Tommy, Winky, darling, idiot*)

2) +Distance; +Title;

Distance: possessive pronoun ^ Title: reverence

(Eg: *Your Honour*)

3) +Title; +Appellation;

Title: respect/politeness ^ Appellation: inherited name/name complex: $\beta^{\wedge}\alpha$, β : given nameⁿ, α : inherited name

(Eg: *Professor Clancy, Ms Sharon Rose Fraser*)

4) +Title; +Appellation;

Title: kin ^ Appellation: given nameⁿ

(Eg: *Uncle Fred*)

The overall system of attending in English is shown in Figure 3.

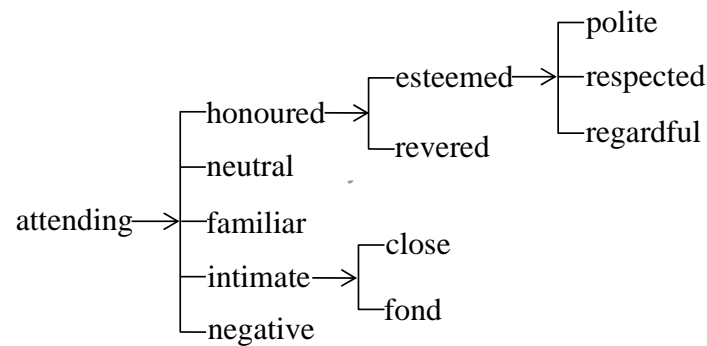


Figure 3: Attending system.

1) [honoured]

1.1) [honoured]-[esteemed]

The realisation includes the final Appellation function.

1.1.1) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[polite]

This is realised by only the Appellation function which is realised by the respect, courtesy, kin class, or the β^{α} respect complex in which α is the respect class and β is the politeness class.

1.1.2) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[respected]

This is realised by the Appellation function and the preceding Title function. The Title is realised by the respect or politeness class. The Appellation is realised by the inherited name class or the β^{α} name complex in which β is the repeatable given name class and α is the inherited name class.

1.1.3) [honoured]-[esteemed]-[regardful]

This is realised by the Appellation function and the preceding Title function. The Title is realised by the kin class, and the Appellation is realised by the repeatable given name class.

1.2) [honoured]-[revered]

This is realised by the Distance function and the following Title function. The Distance is realised by the possessive pronoun class, and the Title is realised by the reverence class.

2) [neutral]

This is realised by only the Appellation function which is realised by the α^{β} name complex in which α is the repeatable given name class and β is the inherited name class.

3) [familiar]

This is realised by only the Appellation function which is realised by the repeatable given name class.

4) [intimate]

The realisation only includes the Appellation function.

4.1) [intimate]-[close]

This is realised by the Appellation function which is realised by the nickname or diminutive class.

4.2) [intimate]-[fond]

This is realised by the final Appellation function which is realised by the endearment or kin class.

5) [negative]

This is realised by only the Appellation function which is realised by the derogation class.

Developed from Figure 3 above, the whole negotiating system network in English is detailly outlined in Figure 4 below.

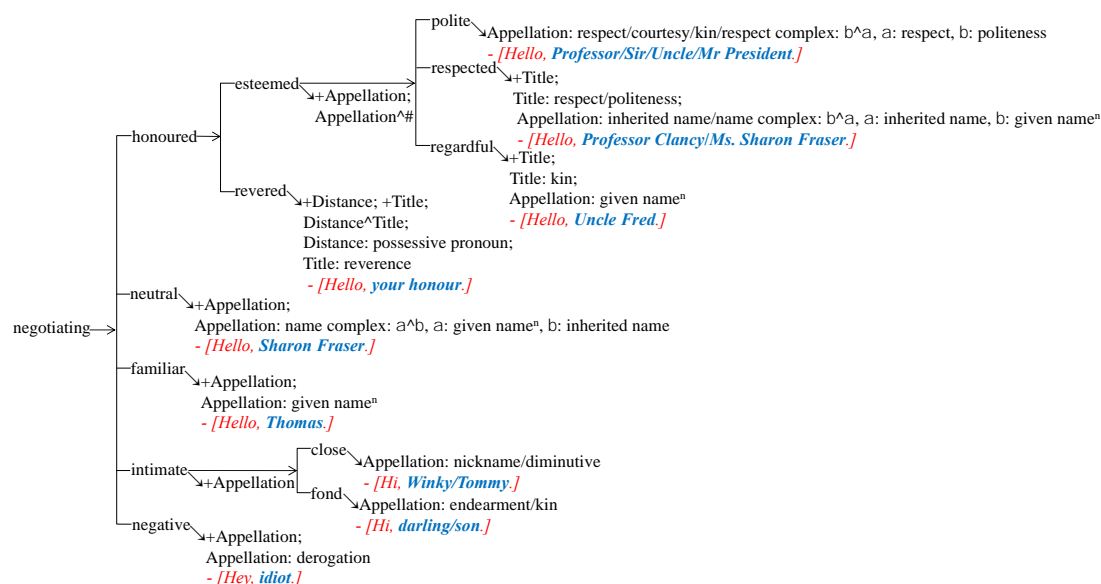


Figure 4: Detailed attending system network with illustrative sentences and examples.

4. Discussion

4.1. You and Somebody

There are different opinions about whether treat *you* in English as proper names as vocatives, like Quirk and others include *you* or even *somebody* as vocatives, while other scholars like Brown and Ford only apply names and titles to address people [15] [19]. This paper excludes *you* as it is not fully qualified: *you* could generally mean anybody but not a proper name without any specific characteristics, and thus in the real world, it is more likely to be accompanied by other information pragmatically, like gestures pointing or staring at the receiver, to ensure it addresses a specific person, and that is also the reason why they are seen in break-down conversations that the receiver does not realise *you* is a vocative for him. This justification also applies to excluding the indefinite pronoun: *somebody* [15].

4.2. Generalisation

This paper only classifies words into different classes according to their original meanings. However, the generalised meanings also frequently appear in daily discourse, which is left for future research. For example, the words regarding kin class could have developed meanings beyond lineage, mainly related to religions, like Sister could mean a female member of a religious group [20]. Besides, it is easy to see a symbolic nickname evolved from a widely disseminated real person or artistic image, suggesting a specific characteristic.

4.3. Vocatives in Writing

Proper names are typically employed as vocatives in spoken language. Still, they can also be used similarly to address people in writing: the salutation is a variant form of greeting move to others, and the signature is also a written leave-taking move to others. In this sense, proper names used in these situations could also be considered vocatives which also could be described systematically with features, structures, functions, and classes, for example, the initialling name in an email. Moreover, while describing the signature, it could involve a new Award function realised by the achievement class, like *RN* in *Amy Austin, RN*.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the topic of this paper is the proper names used as vocatives, which is mentioned in the introduction section. Moreover, it is argued as a type of linguistic item that needs to be studied under the SFL model. The following section lays the foundations before entering the analysis, including the theories of SFL and proper names and vocatives and previous studies about proper names and vocatives in English. Section three shows detailed descriptions of the English vocative systems, illustrating all possible choices of word functions and word classes and possible structures in negotiating and attending with explaining the whole network step by step with images of the detailed system network with illustrative sentences and examples. Section four is concerned with the limitations of this study and offers some suggestions for future research. Overall, this preliminary research describing the structures of proper names used as vocatives in English will call for attention to this under-researched area which theoretically fits the idea of SFL relating the different grammatical choices to the interpersonal functions and practically offers guidance for better information exchanges by understanding the different situations in which proper names are used and the relationships and emotions implied by the speakers in communication.

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