

## Vocatives in Amele, Papua New Guinea

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### I Introduction

Every language has grammar and lexicon used for day to day communication. Languages also have address terms and vocatives. Address terms specify family members and relatives, such as father, mother, uncle, etc. A vocative identifies a person on the spot. Vocatives are used independently, as in “Father!” and “You!” [cf. Sonnenhauser & Hanna (2013), McWhorter (2013) and Zwicky (1974)].

This study is concerned with the vocative forms in the Amele language spoken in Papua New Guinea. Amele is one of the Trans-New Guinea languages, and its grammar has a complicated noun and verb morphology [Foley (2000)]. Amele is mainly used in everyday conversations in the area and has discourse-oriented phenomena [cf. Nose (2016b, 2018, 2020)]. This study investigates the vocative forms and address terms in Amele and tries to describe the deeper level of its usages and explain them in functional terms. Further, Amele-speaking people are bilingual. They can code-switch between Amele and Tok Pisin, an English-based Creole, quite freely. The study considers the code-switching between Amele and Tok Pisin, and their vocative usages.

In this paper, section 2 presents a previous study of vocatives, address terms, and introduces the Amele language. Section 3 constitutes the data of the vocative expressions in Amele, and section 4 is the discussion, while Section 5 is the conclusion.

## II General remarks concerning vocative and address terms and the Amele language

This section reviews several studies on address terms and vocatives (cf. Brown & Gilman (1960), Maccoonnell-Ginet (2003, 2020), Sonnenhauser & Hanna (2013), Zwicky (1974), and others) and introduces the sample language, Amele, including grammatical and sociolinguistic situations.

Amele is one of the Trans-New Guinea languages spoken in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea. Roberts (1987) has already described Amele's grammar. The author started fieldwork in the Amele community in 2006 and has been describing its grammar and sociolinguistic observations (Foley (2000), Nose (2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2020), Vaux (2007)) since. Word order in the Amele is a fixed Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). Amele has a complicated verb morphology and tense, and person and number information. Sociolinguistically, most speakers of Amele are bilingual with Tok Pisin, and they frequently code-switch between the two languages in their daily lives. In Papua New Guinea, people have recently quit speaking their own native language and switching to Tok Pisin. However, the Amele communities still maintain their Amere language very well. (Nose (2020), Wurm (1979)).

Lexically, languages have various kinds of kinship terms like “father,” “mother,” nicknames like “Jim” for James, and diminutive forms like Tarou-chan (“small Tarou” in Japanese), as well as grammatical personal pronouns, like “you” and “he.” When language speakers use these terms in conversation, they can use them as address terms (1).

1) The vocative case (grammatical vocative) is common in several Indo-European languages (Latin, Romanian, and Lithuanian) and other languages (Arabic, Georgian, and Korean). Particularly, it is used for calling the person on site.

Lithuanian has 7 cases — nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, locative, and voc-

- (1) Amele:  
Mam “father”  
Aic “mother”

These address terms can be used when speakers call for other people; in this case, they function as vocatives, as in (2).

- (2) Amele:  
Mam, hoga! “Father, come!”

Nose (2018) examined address terms in Amele, and this study will explore its vocative usages. The vocative is generally used in grammatical terms. For example, Latin has the vocative case, as in (3).

- (3) Latin:  
Brūt-e “Oh, Brūtus”  
(nominative form: Bruutus)

The vocative case is used in Russian, Romanian, Arabic, and other languages and has been discussed in these languages previously. It is a common tool in literary pieces and religious texts. However, the vocative case does not appear to be necessary for grammar, in general. Instead, it is related to sociolinguistic or pragmatic factors.<sup>1)</sup>

Roberts (1987: 182) described the vocative case in Amele as indicating “the use of a proper name, kinship term, title, or greeting followed by the vocative particles *o* or *e* expressing a calling or exclamation.” He also pointed out that the vocative particles *Se* (which translates to “Hey”) or *O* can be used more frequently in Amele songs at the end of a line or verse. Examples are shown in (4).

ative. The following are nominative and vocative examples (Sakurai 2007: 36):

“children” nominative: *vaikas*, vocative: *vaïke*  
“brothers” nominative: *brólis*, vocative: *bróli*

- (4) Vocatives in Amele: (Roberts 1987)<sup>2)</sup>  
 Sewa o. “O Sewa”  
 Au e. “O mother”  
 Se gaini eu adi odoga?  
 “Hey, my friend what on earth have you done?”  
 O caja ana unuguna?  
 “O woman where are you going?”

Additionally, Roberts (1987: 272) pointed out there is a vocative mood in Amele. “The vocative mood expresses the notion of friendly calling or hailing,” as in (5).

- (5) Vocative mood in Amele:  
 Cois o “OK”  
 Hoga e “Come!”

This study’s author has already collected the address terms in Amele (Nose 2018) and tries to examine the usages of these terms in everyday discourse. This study will examine the vocative usages vis-a-vis the address terms, acquire deeper descriptions of vocatives for calling in the Amele, and then explain them in sociolinguistic terms (cf. MaccconnellGinet (2003, 2020), Meyerhoff (2015), Zwicky (1974)).

The author conducted field interviews in Sein village, an Amele-speaking area in Papua New Guinea. The interviews took place in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Amele speakers are bilinguals who also speak Tok Pisin, a common language in Papua New Guinea, the usage of which is investigated in this study.<sup>3)</sup>

**2)** Such vocative particles can be observed in other languages. For example, Japanese has the vocative particle “yo”

(i) Okaasan “mother,” okaasan yo “mother!”  
 (ii) Gakuseisan “student,” gakuseisan yo “Student!”

### III | Vocative data in Amele

This section shows the vocative data, addresses terms, and tries to describe the meanings of its usages. There are various ways of calling someone, and their forms are realized grammatically and lexically. Amele speakers can use both Amele and Tok Pisin callings.

This section shows the data on vocatives, personal pronouns, kinship terms, friends and neighbors, nicknames, and borrowings from Tok Pisin and other means.

First, Amele has personal pronouns, as shown in (6).

- (6) Personal pronouns in Amele: (Nose (2018, 2020))

1st person singular:	Ija
2nd person singular:	Ina
3rd person singular:	Uqa
1st person dual: (“you and me”)	Ere
1st person plural:	Ege
2nd person plural:	Age
3rd person plural: (“Ete hi” for non-human)	Age

There is a distinction between the second-person singular “ina” and the plural “age.” Still, their difference does not imply a T/V (Tu/Vous) difference, as observed in French and other Indo-European languages (Brown and Gilman 1960). Strangely, the 2nd person plural and 3rd person plural forms are the same — “age,” — and the 1st person dual “ere” includes “you and me.” Thus, the Amele speaker calls someone by using personal pronouns; the following pronouns are preferred, as in (7).

**3)** The author could not reach the site in 2020 and later, because of the COVID19 pandemic. The author wishes the Amele people good health and plans to visit the site again.

- (7) Personal pronoun choices:
- Speaker > one hearer: Ina (Ina, ihoc foʔ; you, alright, are you)
  - Speaker > hearers: Age
  - Speaker and hearer/hearers: Ere

Next, this study shows kinship terms in the Amele. As shown in (8), Nose (2018) collected kinship terms in the Amele, and they may frequently be used as vocatives. Also, calling others by their first name is an important option, as in (9). In fact, first names are commonly used as a calling, while last names are rarely used. The Amele first names are often related to Christianity as they are Christians and hence, have Christian names.<sup>4)</sup>

- (8) baic dana / baic aya  
 “Grandfather/ grandmother”  
 mam / aic  
 “Father/ mother”<sup>5)</sup>  
 wari (also means “friend”) / ebimei,  
 “Brothers/ sisters”  
 meru / melait,  
 “Son/ daughter”
- (9) Examples of first and last names in Amele:  
 First names:  
 Males: Lio, Neret, Batren, Nataniel, Wes  
 Females: Adela, Nicola, Deborah, Marita, Katrin  
 Last names: Tamo, Jogi, Wala, Gadua

When Amele people speak to each other, they use kinship terms among family members. In Amele-speaking villages, they use personal pronouns, nicknames, and first names. Outside Amele villages, they switch languages from Amele to Tok Pisin. Other people do not un-

derstand that Tok Pisin is a common language among Amele and non-Amele speakers.

Thus, this study describes the choice of languages inside and outside the community, as in (10).

- (10) Language choice in an Amele-speaking area:
- Inside the community: mainly Amele, but the speakers can freely code-switch between Amele and Tok Pisin
  - Outside the community: Tok Pisin. Other people speak each other’s native language, and Amele is unintelligible.

Next, when speakers call their friends, they can use the words meaning “brother, sister,” and these words function as a kind of greeting and a vocative [see (12)], too (Nose 2018). In the Amele, the word “wari” means “friend, brothers, and sisters.” “Wari” designates people emotionally close to the speaker. Amele speakers can code-switch between Amele and Tok Pisin, inside and outside the community (11), while simultaneously addressing males and females.

- (11) To friends:
- To male friends:  
 Wari (Amele)/ Poro, brata, friend (Tok Pisin)
  - To female friends:  
 Wari, Aqa (Amele)/ Susa, friend (Tok Pisin)
- (12) “Wari” functions as a “greeting” (to male/females)  
 “Hei, wari! Ihoc foʔ”  
 (Hi, friend, how are you?)

<sup>4)</sup> But Christian names are not necessary. One boy in an Amele village was named after the author — Masahiko. Thus, their naming system is considered to be free.

<sup>5)</sup> In Amele, “mam” means “father,” and this fact is confusing for other language speakers, because mam (“father” in Amele) and mama (“mother” in Tok Pisin) are similar.

In (12), the vocative form “wari” is similar to the usage of the Australian English word “mate” (cf. Rendle-Short (2009)).

As shown in Nose (2018), Amele speakers use nicknames as address terms. They can use them as callings, too. As shown in (13), Amele speakers can use both Amele and Tok Pisin nicknames, but their forms are sometimes periphrastic and are not easy to use as a calling. These nicknames can be used when the person addressed is not present.

(13) Nicknames in Amele (Amele; Tok Pisin; “English”)

- Mala ofdo dana; Kakarukman;  
“man raising chickens”
- Saab ehe dana; Farmer;  
“farmer(agriculture)”
- Uur ehe dana; Man bilong painim fish;  
“fisherman”

In Amele, figurative words are used as nicknames. For example, there is a place where water is taken from the river below the valley for washing and drinking (water place) in the Amele villages. The man who lives near it are called “waa-na” (at water place). A wife from a different village who comes to an Amele village by marriage is called by the location name of her hometown. These are metonymy-based vocatives. Particularly, Amele speakers and other native people in Papua New Guinea call people by their location name (14). Amele speakers address outsiders according to where they come from, as in “Dagua” and “Karkar,”

and by their proximity to a distinctive landmark, for example “telikom tower” and “waa-na.”

(14) Nicknames using metonymy:

- Dagua; (a person from Dagua, Sepik; place name)
- Karkar; (a person from Karkar Island)<sup>6)</sup>
- Telikom tower; (a person living near a mobile phone tower)<sup>7)</sup>
- Waa-na; (a person living near water)

Finally, this study specifies borrowings from the Tok Pisin language. Because Amele speakers can code-switch between the two languages quite freely; although they can speak Tok Pisin among Amele-speaking people only. However, as in (15), foreign-based job titles are expressed only in Tok Pisin.

(15) Professions, in borrowings from Tok Pisin:

- |            |                                    |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| Tisa       | “teacher”                          |
| Pasta      | “pastor”                           |
| Professor  | “Professor”                        |
| Missionari | “missionary”                       |
| Gavman     | “Government official”              |
| SIL        | “person from SIL                   |
|            | (Summer Institute of Linguistics)” |

Moreover, there are no honorific titles in Amele. Instead, English-based honorific titles are used as vocatives: mista (Mr.), missis (Mrs.), and white man (white people).<sup>8)</sup>

**6)** Dagua and Karkar are terms for women, i.e. Amele men’s wives, who came from the Dagua (Sepik Province) and Karkar island, respectively. Dagua and Karkar people have stayed in the Amele area after their marriage and they speak Amele, too. Nevertheless, the Amele people call them Dagua and Karkar. This fact indicates that they are still regarded as outsiders in the Amele village.

**7)** In 2017, a cell phone company in Papua New Guinea built a cell phone tower in the Amele village. A man lives near and takes care of the tower. The villagers call him “telikom tower.”

**8)** In Amele conversation, speakers frequently use the discourse markers *madoga* “I tell you,” and *hoga* “come on.” These discourse markers can function to introduce further discourse (to urge the listener to speak) and they partly have the function of calling (from speaker to listener).

## IV | Discussion

This section discusses the research questions mentioned earlier. We have observed various usages of the vocative case and address terms in section 3. Next, we discuss how Amele speakers use vocatives for calling in the Amele and Tok Pisin languages. Finally, we discuss the sociolinguistic effects of the vocative.

There are many kinds of previous studies on vocatives and the related subject matter (Brown and Gilman 1960, McConnell-Ginet 2003, 2020, Meyerhoff 2015, Sonnnehauser and Hanna 2013, Zwicky 1974), which approached the vocative forms semantically and cross-linguistically. Also, the vocative form is used in Latin and other Indo-European languages. Many researchers have considered vocatives in terms of historical linguistics and other areas. This study shows the usage of vocatives in the Amele, following the investigation of address terms in the language (Nose 2018) Zwicky (1974: 791), indicates that all address forms are usable as calls. Roberts (1987) points out several vocative usages (vocative particles and vocative mood) in Amele. This study found that address terms can be used in vocatives and that since Amele speakers are bilingual, both can be used as vocatives in Amele and Tok Pisin. The language choice is reflected in the sociolinguistic effects.

First, this study discusses the particular usage of the vocative in Amele. There are no formal (grammatical) vocative means in Amele. Roberts (1987) points out the vocative particles and the vocative mood, but this study did not ob-

serve them; this study considers them a type of interjection. Therefore, there is no productive vocative form in Amele. Additionally, there is no “Tu/Vous” (T/V) distinction in Amele, like in French. Grammatically, Amele lacks polite forms. Instead, Amele speakers use several kinds of address terms (personal pronouns, kinship terms, nicknames, and first names) as vocatives and code-switch vocative terms between Amele and Tok Pisin. Additionally, several address terms “wari, brata, sista, frend” function as signs of intimacy.

Second, this study tries to explain the vocative usages in terms of sociolinguistics. Amele-speaking people have several options (personal pronouns, kinship terms, and others in Amele and Tok Pisin). Their usages depend on intimacy, as shown in (16a). Amele speakers prefer the Amele language in everyday discourse when they are part of an in-group. At the same time, they are bilingual speakers and prefer to use Tok Pisin when they speak with non-Amele speakers or an out-group, as shown in (16b). Also, Tok Pisin usage for out-group speakers indicates a kind of non-intimacy and politeness. They can also code-switch between Amele and Tok Pisin (16a, 16b) and manage their human relations.

- (16) Intimacy scale in an Amele-speaking area:
- Amele language (in-group): wari [first name, kinship, nickname > location name] > pronoun > job titles (Tok Pisin loans)
  - Tok Pisin languages (out-group): frend [first name, kinship, nickname] > pronoun > job titles

## V Conclusion

This study claims that Amele speakers use a kind of code-switching in vocative usages. They use Amele vocatives with familiar people or those inside their community. Also, they prefer using Tok Pisin vocatives with non-familiar people or outsiders to their community. There is no polite form in the Amele or Tok Pisin language; therefore, language choices, either in Amele or Tok Pisin, reflect sociolinguistic relations. Instead, people use the intimate term of “wari” in Amele and “frend” in Tok Pisin.

Amele and Tok Pisin are mostly used in spoken situations and rarely used in written situations (except at a Mass in Christian churches and in bibles). Therefore, the Amele and Tok Pisin languages do not require a grammatical vocative, though they developed vocative particles [“wari” (friend)] and place names to function as vocatives. Nevertheless, several vocative options are deeply related to the address terms, and their variations are realized in the intimacy scale of Amele and Tok Pisin, as shown in (16).

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There are around 270 indigenous languages spoken in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea. This study focuses on the vocative forms in Amele, a Trans-New Guinea language (Roberts 1987), and Tok Pisin, the English-based Creole. The Amele speakers are mostly bilingual of Amele and Tok Pisin, and this study pays special attention to the vocative usages of the two languages. Amele speakers have maintained their indigenous language in such a bilingual situation.

When people want to call other people or address them, they use vocative forms (Sonnenhauser and Hanna 2013, Zwicky 1974). To call others, we can use personal pronouns such “you, nimen (in Chinese), Sie (in German), and Anata (in Japanese).” At the same time, these pronouns can function as vocatives. This study investigated a variety of vocative forms in Amele and Tok Pisin, such as “friend,” “brother,” “that man” and “you.”

This study found that the term in Amele “wari” means “friend(s), brother(s)” for calling men and women. The term “wari” is frequently used inside the Amele community, and the 2nd person pronoun “ina” (you) is not preferred using as a call. Tok Pisin has the equivalent forms, “frend,” “poro,” “brata” and “sista,” in addition to the 2nd person “yu/yupla.” When the Amele people recognize the people outside the community, they stop using “wari,” because they are not their group.

Finally, this study claims that the Amele speakers use a kind of code-switching in vocative usages. They use the vocatives in the Amele language to familiar people or inside the community. Otherwise, they prefer Tok Pisin vocatives to non-familiar people or outside the community. On the other hand, there is no polite form in Amele and Tok Pisin.