Face and address terms: A case of some wedding invitation cards

Abstract
This study investigated whether or not self-address terms used on wedding invitation cards in Sunyani, Ghana, can be considered as face-threatening. Eelen’s (2014) critique of politeness theory served as the conceptual lenses for the study. Using a longitudinal study approach and a snowballing data collection procedure, 442 wedding invitations cards were collected within a twelve-month period. Findings reveal five categories of self-address terms used on wedding invitation cards, namely, religious, academic, professional, honorific and affectionate. Moreover, while some respondents submit that it is necessary for couples to use their titles as address terms on their wedding invitation cards and that doing so is not face-threatening, other respondents argue that the use of such address terms is tantamount to flaunting one’s accomplishments and is definitely a face-threatening act that must be avoided. Largely, respondents within the University of Energy and Natural Resources community have the former view while those outside the University community hold the latter view. The implication of this study, therefore, is that context matters and affects the meaning that is assigned to address terms and such contexts must be taken into consideration should couples choose to use self-address terms on their wedding invitation cards.

Keywords: Address terms, culture, face-threatening acts, Ghana, power, wedding invitation cards

How to Cite:
Public Interest Statement
The dynamism of human viewpoints and the multifacetedness of cultural contexts can be fertile grounds for miscommunication in even seemingly subtle matters. One of such subtle but happy matters is with regard to wedding invitation cards whose purpose is generally to invite friends and colleagues to celebrate a wedding ceremony. This study has shown that the choice of personal address terms on wedding invitation cards must be done consciously, taking into consideration the culture of the people who are invited. This conscious effort will avoid any face threats on the part of wedding invitees.

Introduction
Like personal names, address terms identify individuals from a group and accord them recognition or dignity. They encompass more sophistication both in meaning and concept than are perceived prima facie. Address terms have, therefore, received a number of scholarly attentions from sociolinguists over the years. One very recent extensive work in this regard is Braun (2012) who investigated how different cultures across the globe employ address terms and the idiosyncrasies address terms exhibit according to the dynamics of culture. The body of works on address terms such as Clayman (2010), Hua (2010) and Rendle-Short (2010) continues to grow. All these have followed the general trend in the study of address terms by replanting concepts and theories in different settings of time and place and investigating how the dynamics of a people and their cultures affect their choice of address terms.

The present study differs slightly from the regular ones on address terms in that these regular studies on address terms discuss sociolinguistically how people are addressed in various cultures and settings. Investigations have been carried out on various types of address terms in such lines as formality, informality, status and so on and how sociolinguistic variables such as age, sex, education among others have informed the choice and use of address terms. All these usually focus on how individuals address other people other than themselves and none of these involves address terms as used on wedding invitation cards. There are also a growing number of studies on wedding invitation cards such as Sawalmeh (2015, 2014), Faramarzi, Elekaei, & Tabrizi (2015), Al-Zubaidi (2017) and Sharif & Yarmohammadi (2013). These studies explored wedding invitation cards in areas of discourse analysis and the linguistic items employed in these cards as regards the culture of the people investigated but none of these explored the use of address terms in wedding invitation cards. The present paper fills this lacuna by exploring how individuals address themselves in wedding invitation cards in the Ghanaian society. Attention is given to how individuals address themselves, not others, and specifically, on wedding invitation cards.

In the Ghanaian society, wedding ceremonies are highly honourable occasions in an individual’s life. They are considered as milestones and events worth celebrating in every sense. Hence, preparations are made to ensure that such events are fruitful and enjoyable. One of such
is the tradition of distributing wedding invitation cards to invite family, friends and close acquaintances. Al Momani & Alrefae (2010:61) submit that a “wedding invitation is an important part of wedding because it is the first thing in the ceremony that guests will see before the wedding starts. It announces good news to family and friends and lets them know when the wedding will take place”. This is also the case in Ghana even as weddings are regarded by many cultures as joyous occasions for the couple and the entire community. The 21st century technological wave has not halted the mass distribution of wedding invitation cards but rather skyrocketed it as people have adopted to sending soft copies of them to their invitees’ emails and social media platforms such WhatsApp, twitter, Instagram and Facebook. In these invitation cards, some Ghanaian couples cease the opportunity to reveal their personal accomplishments by their use of their acquired titles as self-address terms. The general impression is that to be invited to someone’s wedding by itself is an honour given to the invitee. A couple’s choice of some address terms for themselves may have differing views; some may consider such as a sign of politeness while others may see it as impolite or face-threatening. This paper analyses how address terms used in wedding invitation cards in a Ghanaian university can have the potential to be face-threatening, according to Eelen’s (2014) critique of politeness theory and its face threatening acts. Data was collected among students and staff of the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana. Random wedding invitees were interviewed as regards their views of the employment of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards by couples doing the invitation. The paper is sectioned under the following headings: research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, findings and discussion, conclusion and implication.

Research Questions
The present paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What personal address terms do Ghanaian couples employ for themselves in their wedding invitation cards?
2. What are the views of the public towards these personal address terms?

Literature Review
One area that has attracted many studies over the years are address terms. Address terms and titles have been discussed extensively in different studies. One of such is Abugharsa (2014) who investigated address terms used in Lybian Arabic and the similarities and differences with those used in other Arabic societies. Abugharsa (2014) identified that politeness, though being a universal phenomenon, is expressed differently according to cultures and norms of a people. In the light of that, what pertains to politeness among Arabic speakers may not be regarded as polite by other cultures and vice versa. Politeness in the use of address terms, therefore, differ from culture to culture (Youssef, 2012; Wardhaugh, 2010).
Abugharsa (2014) found that address terms in Arabic vary according to contexts such as family, strangers, teachers and students. In families, parents address their children differently according to their ages. In other instances, parents employ bipolar address terms when they refer to their children by their own titles; for example, a mother referring to her daughter as ‘mummy’ or a father calling his son ‘daddy’. According to Abugharsa (2014), strangers are also addressed according to their gender and ages. As regards students, Abugharsa (2014:10) submits that “the academic title-first name-last name forms are the only ones used in all Arabic countries”. Abugharsa’s (2014) general conclusions are as follows:

In general, factors such as age, gender, position and social status are said to be the core determiners for choosing the appropriate terms and titles to use with citizens from different ages and walks of life. (p. 11).

We note from Abugharsa (2014) that a lot of things must be taken into consideration regarding the use of address terms for others. Some of these he mentions are position, social status and gender. The thrust is for one to be able to employ address terms appropriately and acceptably according to the dominant culture of a people. If these factors are important in the way one addresses another, they equally hold water in the way an individual addresses himself or herself. That is the gap the present study seeks to fill with the focus on how people address themselves on wedding invitation cards. These variables pointed out by Abugharsa (2014) are important in determining whether or not the use of personal address terms on the part of couples would be potentially face-threatening to wedding invitees.

The appropriate employment of address terms has its role at the work place too. Huang and Sultan (2014) studied terms of address in the Chinese business enterprise and came up with interesting findings. They discovered that a speaker’s address choices relate largely to their gender, the enterprise’s location and whether or not the enterprise is government owned or privately owned. They also found that the address term ‘brother/sister’ has replaced the more formal ‘comrade/colleague’ as a way of projecting solidarity among workers. Once again, the sociolinguistic variables of gender and others have irreplaceable roles to play in the appropriateness of address terms at the work place. We have also seen the skillful use of ‘brother/sister’ in place of the more formal ‘comrade/colleague’. By ‘brother/sister’, workers are bound to one another as one family and they grow in unity. Wedding invitations are reasonably and usually extended to family, friends and colleagues, many of whom feel dignified by that gesture. The appropriate use of address terms on the part of couples can enhance the good spirit among them and their invitees. Additionally, the acceptable use of address terms, which includes not using one at all, can unite invitees with couples for a successful wedding. The present study’s aim is to find out how wedding invitees view the address terms couples employ for themselves on
their wedding invitation cards. Findings would serve as empirical guidelines regarding the right use or disuse of address terms on the part of couples who are planning to invite others to their weddings via invitation cards.

Since appropriate use of address terms is a livewire for healthy relationships among a people, studies have also investigated teacher-student relationships with regard to the use of address terms. Inkeri (2011) investigated teacher-oriented address terms in students’ reproach turns. He discovered that teachers’ criticism of students by use of address terms are done in two ways – address terms used on their own or embedded in a humorous turn. Teachers do not, therefore, use reproach address terms explicitly; their use is euphemised in humour. This reveals that while students sometimes need to be criticised to improve their academic lives, such criticisms should be done to build up rather than tear down. The use of reproach address terms embedded in humour to correct students is a very intelligent tactic to maintain relationships and at the same time to teach. It is common knowledge that colleagues or students could employ among themselves address terms that can be considered offensive. However, if these are coded with humour, they become a laughing matter. The appropriate use of address terms, therefore, requires a lot of consciousness as it encompasses knowledge of a people’s culture as well as several other factors.

Clayman (2010) investigated how individuals use address terms during interviews. He argues that the employment of address terms is more frequent in institutional contexts such as interviews than in other contexts because of the normative question-and-answer structure of interviews. He adds that address terms can be used in the service of a variety of actions beyond addressing. Activities such as topic shifts, non-conforming responses and disagreements warrant the employment of address terms. Arguably, an interviewer might not be abreast with the names of interviewees nor vice versa and so one might result to address terms as these are the only easy way to address an individual without stating his or her specific name.

Rendle-Short (2010), on the other hand, discusses how the address term ‘mate’ can be interpreted as antagonistic or hostile. He discusses that this address term is sometimes considered as face-mitigating in following requests, advice giving or in disagreements. He adds that when it is prepositioned, an address term changes the sequential organization of a talk. He continues that the effect of the meaning of this address term can be deduced from how it is positioned in the statement. This address term evidently is cordial and exists only in an informal or cordial relationship.

Akindele (2013) has expressed his views on address terms in the society. He investigated address terms of various types via the lenses of sociolinguistic variables and culture. Akindele (2013) examined the address forms used by the Basotho people. He discusses the various types and the factors that determine their use. Drawing data from semi-literate and literate urban and rural population of the Maseru district of Lesotho, it came to the fore that the commonest form
of address used by the Basotho people is Title Plus First Name (TPFN). For example, ‘Ntate Thabo’ which means ‘Father Thabo’ and ‘M’e Puleng’ means ‘Mother Puleng’. Akindele (2013) concludes that these titles are used by close relations and familiar people. A second look at his study shows that the people of Lesotho prefer to add titles to names because they serve as indicators of deference and politeness to the bearers of the names as their culture dictates. It also reveals how culture plays a role in the use of titles. In the Lesotho society, ‘Mother’ and ‘Father’ are seen as titles and attached to the names of close family relations to indicate politeness whether or not these individuals are the biological parents of the addresser. Hence, it is considered an act of disrespect to mention an older relative’s name without adding their specific title to it. The foregoing studies have shown the multifacetedness of address terms as they are employed in different situations and cultures. We learn, therefore, that our conclusions about how address terms affect people cannot be taken for granted. Empirical evidences must inform us as to which, how, why and when address terms can be used without offending people.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that provides the conceptual spine for the present paper is the critique of politeness theory propounded by Eelen (2014). The concept of politeness is built on the understanding that politeness refers to actions or efforts employed to preserve or attack a person’s self-image or self-esteem. This self-image is termed ‘face’, which can either be saved or lost. A person’s face is saved if their self-image is preserved or protected. On the other hand, one loses one’s face if one’s face is attacked. In the natural world the feeling of shame, shock, anger, etc are signs that one has lost his or her face, while good feelings and reactions such as heartfelt laughter, a smile and handshake are signs showing that an individual’s face or image is saved. Eelen (2014) has identified two types of faces, namely, positive face and negative face. The former they explained as the want or desire for one to be acceptable or approved by others while the latter is the desire or assumption that one has no bounds and could do whatever one pleases. A positive face, therefore, refers to one’s self-image while negative face refers to one’s freedom or desire to act. Since the politeness theory’s spine is the self-image of people, Eelen (2014) has identified face-threatening acts, acts that can negatively affect a person’s esteem. They revealed that face-threatening acts can damage the image of the speaker/writer or listener/reader and that these can be verbal (words), paraverbal (tone and pitch) and paralinguistic (gestures, facial expressions, body language etc). These face-threatening mediums can happen in one or multiple forms at once. It means that one can employ a combination of verbal, paraverbal and non-verbal forms of face threatening acts in a single utterance or action. Because of the universal appeal of the politeness theory, many studies have employed it as a spine to investigate various areas of human endeavours where politeness or lack of it is exhibited. It is common knowledge that human cultures are dynamic and multifaceted. What demonstrates politeness in one culture may be a
face-threatening act in another. An act assumed to be universally polite may turn out to be outright rude in some cultures and vice versa. In that case, nothing should be taken for granted until empirically proved. Weddings in general are a happy occasion for the couple, families and friends. Many cultures deem it a sign of honour to be officially invited to a wedding via a wedding invitation card. Many invitees receive these cards with joy which means that their self-images are preserved and that they feel worthy and respected to be officially invited via the means of a wedding card. These wedding invitation cards, soft or hard, are beautifully designed and decorated and the use of words are carefully chosen, including the address terms by which the couples refer to themselves in these invitation cards. These address terms are the focus of this paper. This study seeks to ascertain whether the address terms by which couples refer to themselves on wedding invitation cards in Ghana can be potentially face-threatening.

Methodology
This study is altogether qualitative inasmuch as findings are wholly descriptive. This paper employs a longitudinal study approach where data was collected over a twelve-month period. The study employs a snowballing sample method where wedding invitation cards were collected from respondents who in turn helped in collecting data from their friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Some were collected from anyone who had them through the help of research assistants. In total, 442 wedding invitation cards, hard and soft, were collected and the personal address terms of the couples were collected and recorded. Moreover, via interviews the views of respondents were sought as to whether or not these address terms are face-threatening and if so, why.

Findings and Discussions
This section presents the findings for the present study by answering the research questions one after the other. The first research question seeks to unearth the personal address terms of couples employed in their wedding invitation cards. The second research question focuses on revealing the views of the public towards the use of these address terms on wedding invitation cards.

Self-Address Terms on Wedding Invitation Cards
The personal address terms on wedding invitation cards collected for the present study are categorized into five groups, namely, religious, academic, professional, honorific and affectionate. Those classified under religion are religious titles commonly used in Ghana. Academic address terms refer to titles one earns according to one’s studies in school. Address terms categorised under professional depicts a person’s occupation of job. Honorific titles are ones that people employ based on some societal privileges or positions they occupy. Affectionate titles are those
that show endearment. The following table presents the address terms according to the groups identified above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Honorific</th>
<th>Affectionate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reverend</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Honourable</td>
<td>Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>Sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophet</td>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Torgbui</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catechist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>Miss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1, it can be seen that the religious use titles such as Reverend, Pastor, Evangelist, Prophet, Catechist and Mallam. Those in academia use titles such as Doctor (PhD) and Professor, while professionals prefer Lawyer, Engineer, Contractor, Doctor (medical) and Counsellor attached to their names. Others also prefer honorific titles such as Honourable, Nana, Chief and Torgbui, Miss and Mister. The title or address term Honourable is one bestowed on political figures such as members of parliament, assembly men and women, district or municipal chief executives and any recognised political position. The term Nana is one accorded to people occupying respected traditional positions among the Akan of Ghana. The individual could be a paramount chief of a traditional area, a sub-chief or a head of a clan. Torgbui is the equivalent of Nana among the Ewe, only that Torgbui refers to a male. Mallam is also used for respected leaders in Muslim communities in Ghana. The rest of the address terms are self-explanatory and need no elaboration.

Views of Respondents in the University of Energy and Natural Resources

The second research question seeks to reveal the views of people towards personal address terms on wedding invitation cards. To answer this question, interviews were conducted amongst some recipients of wedding invitations on the University of Energy and Natural Resources Sunyani campus. Amongst the interviewees were administrators, students, teaching assistants and lecturers. One group of respondents opine that titles must necessarily be added to names on wedding invitation cards. For this group of respondents, titles on wedding invitation cards pose no face-threatening effects for them. For them, the use of titles on wedding invitation cards are rather face mitigating. Amongst these respondents was a female Level 400 student who says she found absolutely nothing wrong with an individual adding certain titles to his/her name on a wedding invitation card. She stated that this will enthuse her to attend the wedding ceremony since she assumes them as rich and from a sophisticated class. She also added that if she had two
invitation cards, one with a title like Doctor or Lawyer and another without any title, she would spontaneously decide to attend the titled invitation. She further submits:

For me, I’m not shy to say that it’s not all weddings I attend. And one thing that motivates me to attend one is simply those who are involved. How do I know whether those involved are big people? Their titles! And you find them right on the cards. (An interviewee remark, March 18, 2020)

The foregoing words clearly reveal that for one group of wedding invitees in Ghana, couple’s employment of personal address terms, particularly those considered to be of high class in the community, are actually to the advantage of the couples because these titles interestingly do not threaten the face of these category of invitees. A female teaching assistant also added that she specifically looks out for titles on wedding invitation cards before attending weddings. She stated that titles are very important and give an identity to an individual. According to her, they should necessarily be added to formal or informal documents such as wedding invitation cards. “It shows the honour you have and how dignified you are”, she concluded. While it could be speculated that one’s use of personal address terms on wedding invitation cards could be a sign of self-advertisement or pride, that still remains at the level of speculation until empirically proved. In fact, one of the speculations of the researchers at the outset of this study is that such use of personal address terms on the part of couples would be considered seriously face-threatening and a sign of arrogance. It turns out to be the exact opposite on the part of some respondents. One female administrator who is already married says she and her husband on their wedding invitation card used their personal titles. She says:

My husband is a pastor and I am a counsellor and we used those titles on our wedding invitation cards. Is there something wrong with that? If you fill forms for employment and anything like that, there is always a column for job or occupation. And while I am a staff of this institution, I’m also a counsellor and will not hesitate to say so. If that is acceptable on forms, what is wrong with using personal address terms on wedding invitation cards? (An interviewee remark, March 23, 2020)

The administrator’s submissions are full of rhetorical questions about the acceptability or otherwise of using personal address terms on wedding invitation cards. Her words reveal a surprise on her part to think that some people could feel that using personal address terms on wedding invitation cards is unacceptable. Whether or not it is acceptable is a question of face and since face spells a people’s image, the only reasonable way to know whether one’s face is threatened or mitigated is to find out from them. On the part of this administrator in question, using such
address terms is not an issue of face threats at all. A newly married lecturer thinks that the use of her academic qualification on her wedding invitation card was not aforethought. She says:

I definitely would want people to grace my wedding and I think that is what the wedding invitation card does – invite people to join us on that special day. And of course, some weddings are strictly by invitation, so was mine. If I intended to frighten people away from my wedding by adding my qualification to my name on the invitation card, why invite them at the first place? (An interviewee remark, March 28, 2020)

The foregoing shows that the employment of personal address terms on wedding invitations cards on the part of some people is done unconsciously and is seen as a harmless practice. The lecturer in questions says her wedding was strictly by invitation and adding her academic qualification to her name on the invitation card was harmless. She submits that if she were aware that such an act to endanger responses from her invitees and at the same time employing such address term, that would defeat her purpose of inviting people to join her in her celebration of matrimony. It follows clearly, therefore, that some couples’ use of personal address terms on their wedding invitation cards is done unconsciously and with no ill intention.

Another group of respondents in the University saw no need for these titles to be added to the names of people on the wedding invitation cards. A male administrator stated that he sees no reason why people add titles to their names on their wedding invitation cards. To him, it is a show-off Ghanaian attitude which is geared towards seeking attention and flaunting one’s success or accomplishments. He bluntly stated: “I will never attend a wedding with a titled invitation card, I would feel very intimidated.” He said he might not be of the same class as the people and will feel inferior going for the occasion.

Another male lecturer also bitterly complained about this. He added that he once saw a relative’s invitation card with the title ‘Doctor’. Upon seeing this, he immediately called the relative and advised her to take the title off her spouse’s name because he felt there was no need to add a title to his name since it is just a mere wedding invitation. This lecturer argues that weddings, though special occasions, are not to be treated as strictly formal occasions since such formality by the use of self-address term on the wedding invitation cards can threaten the face of some invitees, thereby making the occasion a less joyous one.

A third group of respondents sat on the fence as to whether or not the employment of address terms on wedding invitation cards is face-threatening. A male professor gave a more neutral view: “With or without a title, I would freely attend the wedding and I don’t really see the big deal in having a title attached to a wedding invitation card or not.” He added that people have their choices of doing certain things and he respects people’s preferences or choices. Moreover,
he would definitely not make a fuss over it or read any meaning into it if an individual chooses to include his or her title as address terms in their wedding invitation cards. He concluded that the title on the card is definitely not the main focus, the wedding ceremony is, hence, a wedding invitation card should be seen as such and he would not take notice of something as trivial as a title or any other address term. Another female lecturer also stated that wedding invitation cards are not so much of a big deal to check for a title or not. She stated that with or without a title featuring on the card, she would consider attending without hesitation.

We conclude that one reason for the choice of address terms on wedding invitation card is identity. Identity is very significant in the modern Ghanaian society today. Consequently, people see the need of being identified appropriately in the society. This even reflects in their choice of address terms on a wedding invitation card. From Table 1, an observation can be made that those with professions prefer to be identified by that profession, hence attaching the respective titles to their names. For example, a lawyer would like to be identified as a lawyer hence he attaches ‘Lawyer’ to his name on a wedding invitation card to give that distinction and create an identity of a lawyer in the minds of people. A group of respondents also affirm this by stating that titles give identity hence they would want to identify the couple with a particular class before attending their wedding ceremony.

In Ghana, identity plays a very significant role in the society as a result of the existence of the social classes. People in society today are grouped in different social classes usually ranging from the least significant in the society to the most revered. People prefer to be called by their titles in order to fit into a specific social class society has created. For instance, someone would like to be titled as ‘Honourable’ not necessarily as a result of any particular profession attained but the mere fact that he is seen as an important person and in a very prestigious social class. Again, one of the respondents revealed that some people choose to go for wedding ceremonies depending on the class of the people involved. According to one respondent, she prefers to go for a wedding ceremony of people of high social classes, hence she considers a title on a wedding invitation card. This consideration likely influences people’s choice of adding titles to their names on their wedding invitation cards. That is, for example, a medical doctor may consider adding his title to his wedding invitation card so as to project himself or herself as a prestigious person.

Views of the Public
The public’s views towards personal address terms on wedding invitation cards are also discussed in the present paper. The term ‘public’ here refers to people outside the University of Energy and Natural Resources in the Sunyani township of Ghana. Analysis shows that the popular outlook of the public outside the University community is that address terms are face-threatening. Face threatening acts do not indicate or show respect to the addressee. The use of address terms such as job titles or academic degrees on wedding invitation cards is seen as a face-threatening act
according to some opinions gathered. For example, a respondent who is a banker stated that he finds this as people being position conscious and as a result, they add these prestigious titles to their wedding invitation cards. He further adds:

> If it is simply to invite someone to come and grace an important occasion in your life, why add a title to your name? Would the absence of your doctor, lawyer or professor be affected if you choose to drop it from a common wedding invitation card? Titles would kill Ghanaians! (An interviewee remark, April 1, 2020)

These are strong words that reveal that some are not happy at all about the use of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards because they see them as face-threatening. This respondent’s reference to wedding invitation cards as ‘common’ reveals that he does not necessarily think that the use of titles or other address terms in themselves is wrong or unacceptable. He thinks that weddings are not a place for one to flaunt their titles. This type of feeling permeates the public views gathered regarding the use of address terms on wedding invitation cards.

Another respondent, a female pharmacist, stated that she will not attend a wedding ceremony with a titled invitation card. He stated that she would feel inferior. This inferiority complex clearly points to the fact that these respondents’ faces are threatened. Face-threatening acts could be seen as impolite according to Eelen (2014). Therefore, adding titles to names on wedding invitation cards are seen as impolite by respondents outside the University community. This means an individual might receive an invitation card with a self-address term and feel offended or inferior.

Negative Face threatening acts, as explained earlier, damage the faces of the speaker and hearer in several ways. It can cause an individual not to perform a specific task or take a suggestion. This point has been justified by respondents outside the University community who clearly state that they would not attend any wedding ceremony with a titled invitation card as they consider this as intimidating or face-threatening. The politeness theory with its face-threatening acts has seen many schools of thoughts challenging it. However, juxtaposing this theory with the use of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards proved that an individual may feel even insulted receiving a titled invitation when that individual recipient feels inferior to the ones doing the invitation just by means of their employment of self-address terms on the wedding invitation cards. This is an obvious revelation that the employment of address terms on the part of a couple on wedding invitation cards can be face-threatening to some individuals in the society.

We have seen that members of the community outside the University campus generally consider the use of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards as face-threatening. While some members of the University community hold that view too, the popular view is that self-address terms on wedding invitation cards are not face-threatening. The later view which is the
most popular on the campus of the University of Energy and Natural Resources could be that members of the University community are used to hearing address terms used on day-to-day basis. Address terms such as Sir, Madam, Doctor, Accountant, Lawyer, Professor, Senior Lecturer, Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Estate Office, Dean, Head of Department (HoD), Patron and the like are very common and used daily insofar as some individual names of the bearers of these address terms are totally lost until their titles change. This exposure to the preponderant use of address terms in the University community is possibly responsible for the popular view that the use of address terms on wedding invitation cards is not face-threatening. On the other hand, members outside the University community are aware of the use of address terms. However, they are not exposed to their use as those respondents from the University community. This is likely what has shaped the views of respondents outside the University that the employment of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards is unacceptable and face-threatening. These differences in viewpoints towards the same thing reveals that one’s environment plays a major role in one’s perception of things and that context is to be considered when we are analysing the view of people towards what we may consider ourselves in society to be harmless as in the case of the use of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards.

**Conclusion and Implication**

This paper has shown that everyday things as basic as self-address terms on wedding invitation cards carry more meaning than society may be aware of. Besides, what we may assume to be harmless may actually be face-threatening. Findings have revealed three main views as regards the employment of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards, namely, first, those who see them as a harmless practice, second, those who view them as face-threatening and third, those who are neutral towards their use. Largely those of the university see it as a harmless practice while those outside the university see such a practice as a way of flaunting one’s accomplishments and is therefore face-threatening. The implication is that environmental context plays a tremendous role in the way people view the use of self-address terms on wedding invitation cards. It follows that in inviting people for their weddings, couples should be conscious of whom these invitations are sent and whether or not the use of self-address terms would be appropriate.

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