

Types of Honorific Address in Male Communication at Universitas Pamulang

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ABSTRACT

Honorifics are an essential aspect of sociolinguistic studies because they represent how language reflects respect, hierarchy, and cultural values within a community. This study focuses specifically on identifying the types of honorific addresses employed in male communication within the English Literature Department of Universitas Pamulang. By limiting the scope to the categorization of address terms, the research aimed to contribute a detailed understanding of how men employ different honorifics in both formal and informal settings. A qualitative descriptive method was applied to explore these linguistic patterns. The participants consisted of 58 male respondents, including students, lecturers, and staff, who were selected purposively to represent a range of academic and social backgrounds. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and direct observations, and were then analyzed thematically to identify recurring address terms. The findings reveal that male speakers at Universitas Pamulang utilize a variety of honorifics, such as *Bang*, *Bro*, *Mas*, *Pak*, *Om*, *Kak*, and *Kang*. These forms indicate a strong tendency to differentiate address terms based on social closeness, hierarchy, and cultural habit.

Keywords: *address term; honorifics; male communication; sociolinguistics; types*

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in constructing social interaction, particularly through the use of address forms that reflect cultural values and interpersonal relationships. In Indonesia, one of the most salient features of communication is the use of honorifics, or titles of respect, which function not only as linguistic markers but also as social tools to negotiate power, age, and intimacy. Within male communication, these honorifics are especially interesting because they reveal how men position themselves and others in social hierarchies while still maintaining solidarity. The problem lies in the fact that although honorifics are widely used in everyday Indonesian interactions, their specific types and variations in male-to-male contexts have not been studied thoroughly. Understanding these honorifics is important because they shed light on broader issues of politeness, identity, and cultural continuity in Indonesian society.

Several previous studies have shed light on the significance of honorifics in Indonesian and other languages, but their focus has varied. Dewi and Subaker (2022), for example, examined Balinese honorific address terms translated into English,

showing how these could be mapped into distinct categories that reflect hierarchical caste systems and kinship relations. Similarly, Sukmawati, Andini, and Rahman (2022) conducted a comparative study on shifts in honorific usage influenced by occupational and social mobility, particularly in relation to promotions among government officials. Their findings revealed how honorifics evolve when individuals experience changes in social status. Further, Andini (2021) explored the comparative use of honorifics in English and Buginese, emphasizing the structural differences between the two systems, where Buginese frequently employs honorific affixes not commonly found in English. These studies collectively demonstrate that honorifics are central to understanding social interaction, yet they also show that most prior research has emphasized either regional traditions or cross-linguistic comparisons.

The gap, therefore, lies in the absence of systematic categorization of the types of honorifics used in male communication. While it is known that terms like “Bang”, “Bro”, “Mas”, “Pak”, “Om”, “Kak”, and “Kang” are frequently employed, the literature does not provide a clear account of how these terms function differently across contexts or what social meanings they carry. Without this focus, our understanding of male linguistic practices in Indonesia remains incomplete. Exploring this issue is crucial because male communication is often tied to notions of solidarity, rivalry, and masculinity, making the honorifics they use not only linguistic artifacts but also cultural symbols.

This study, therefore, aims to address that gap by examining the types of honorific addresses used in male-to-male interactions in Indonesian society. By categorizing these honorifics and analyzing their use, the research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how language reflects both politeness strategies and cultural values. Moreover, the study highlights the way Indonesian males balance respect with familiarity, showing how honorifics become tools for navigating hierarchical yet egalitarian relationships. In doing so, the research contributes both to the field of sociolinguistics and to the broader understanding of Indonesian cultural communication. Based on this purpose, the research question of this study is: What are the types of honorific addresses in male communication?

METHOD

This study used qualitative descriptive research. To analyze a specific field or a small number of people or areas, qualitative research will be used. In qualitative research, theoretical or purposeful rather than probability sampling is used by researchers (Maxwell, 2005, p.115). “The qualitative research relies on human perception about the subjects and understanding” (Stake, 2010). This kind of social study collects data without considering the numerical results. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the role and impact of honorific address in male communication within the English Literature Department of UNPAM (Universitas Pamulang). The focus will be on analyzing how honorifics are used by

male students in formal and informal interactions and how these language choices reflect societal norms and expectations.

This study will be conducted in Universitas Pamulang, especially to the male students, lecturers, or staff at UNPAM. The study will include a purposive sampling of approximately 40 students across different academic levels, different male lecturers and staff. This range will ensure diverse perspectives on how honorifics are used across various stages of the university experience.

Data collection is carried out simultaneously with the observation and interview process from the data that has been collected based on the questionnaire (Sigit Apriyanto et al., 2020; Dalman et al., 2020a; Kasiyarno & Apriyanto, 2025; Santoso & Apriyanto, 2020a; Triana et al., 2020a). This research data based on the honorific address to male communication in UNPAM. The researcher collects the data through giving the Google Form questionnaire with the direct interview to some of the male students, lecturers, and also staff.

The study will employ thematic analysis to interpret the data. Transcripts from interviews, field notes from observations, and focus group discussions will be coded to identify recurring themes related to the use of honorifics, male identity construction, and social hierarchies within the department. Key themes might include:

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were some categories that the men use as an honorific address. Those addresses were discussed on the table below:

Table 1. Types of Honorific Address Used by Male Respondents (N = 58)

No	Honorific	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bang	39	22%
2	Bro	34	20%
3	Mas	31	18%
4	Pak	29	17%
5	Om	16	9%
6	Kak	14	7%

No	Honorific	Frequency	Percentage
7	Other	7	4%
8	Kang	5	3%

“Bang” was one of the highest name on honorific to choose from the total of 58 respondents. The use of “Bang” was chosen by 39 out of 58 respondents because most of the questionnaire was answered by people aged more than 20 years old. The age on 20 years was categorized as the final stage of teenagers, and the use of “Bang” was used on the group of males to address the naming on their habit with their male language.

The term “Bang” originates as the abbreviation of *Abang*, a kinship-based address term used widely in Betawi and Malay culture to refer to an older brother or respected male figure. In everyday practice, however, its function extends beyond the strict kinship domain and has become a salient linguistic marker of respect and solidarity among males. Within the data collected from Universitas Pamulang, many respondents associated “Bang” with a sense of familiarity while still recognizing masculine seniority. This dual function reflects what Holmes (2013) describes as the intersection of solidarity and hierarchy in address systems, where terms simultaneously convey closeness and acknowledge status differences. In this sense, “Bang” is not only a cultural residue but also a dynamic resource adapted by students to manage peer relationships in both formal and informal situations.

In certain regions of Indonesia, especially in urban and multi-ethnic areas such as Jakarta, “Bang” has gradually shifted from its traditional kinship function to become part of everyday slang among young people. Within the student community, the term is often used not only to address older peers but also friends of the same age, showing how its meaning has expanded into a marker of closeness and camaraderie. Male students in particular rely on “Bang” to reinforce a sense of fraternity, signaling that they belong to the same circle while maintaining a subtle recognition of masculine seniority. The widespread use of this term in informal conversations demonstrates that linguistic expressions can be both cultural heritage and contemporary practice, bridging the gap between traditional respect markers and modern youth identity.

“Bro” was the second place on dominant type of honorific address by males. “Bro” was the abbreviation of “Brother”. The naming of “Bro” from the English language has now spread around the world as one of the naming between males. “Bro” was chosen by 34 out of 58 respondents. Even though the naming was “Bro”, it was not indicated that the respondents said it to their family; “bro” could also be used to name another male, even if they were not family.

The use of the honorific “Bro” as a form of address between males can be explained through both sociolinguistic and cultural perspectives. First, “Bro” functions as a solidarity marker rather than a term of hierarchical respect. It conveys

camaraderie, equality, and mutual trust among male speakers, reflecting an informal, peer-to-peer relationship rather than a power differential. In this way, it aligns with positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which aim to minimize social distance and emphasize common ground.

Second, its popularity is reinforced by youth and pop culture influences. The term is widely used in music, movies, and social media, which accelerates its adoption in everyday conversation, especially among younger males. This cultural embedding makes it a linguistic identity marker for in-group membership. Third, in certain male-dominated subcultures such as sports teams, gaming communities, or friendship circles. Apart from that, “Bro” serves as a ritualized greeting or acknowledgment, replacing more formal honorifics. This usage helps maintain a sense of masculine bonding **and** informal mutual **respect**, which is different from the deference-oriented honorifics like “Sir” or “Bang.”

Lastly, because it is short, direct, and emotionally neutral, “Bro” is highly adaptable in a wide range of communicative settings. Male students often employ it in casual banter to create a lighthearted atmosphere, while in supportive contexts, the same term can signal encouragement and solidarity, such as when offering advice or reassurance to a peer. In more sensitive interactions, “Bro” can even function as a mitigator, helping to defuse tension or soften disagreement without sounding overly formal. This multifunctionality illustrates what Kádár and Haugh (2013) describe as the pragmatic flexibility of address terms, where a single expression can shift its meaning depending on intonation, context, and relationship between speakers. In this way, “Bro” goes beyond being a simple borrowing from English; it becomes a strategic linguistic tool that allows male students to navigate solidarity, humor, and conflict management in their daily interactions.

The used of “Mas” went to the third place from total of 31 out of 58 respondents. The term of naming as “mas” is sometimes used politely. “Mas” was the original name from Javanese culture in Indonesia. The use of “Mas” is usually said by an adult male to another adult male as one of politeness, especially when the younger adult male greets and or calls the older adult male. The use of the honorific “Mas” as a form of address between males, particularly in Javanese and broader Indonesian contexts, can be understood through both cultural tradition and sociolinguistic function.

First, “Mas” originates from Javanese culture as a polite address for an older brother or slightly older male, reflecting hierarchical respect and age-based politeness norms. In Javanese speech levels or *unggah-ungguh*, addressing someone with “Mas” signals recognition of their social position and is a form of deferential politeness. Second, within male-to-male communication, “Mas” is often used beyond kinship ties to extend respect to non-relatives, especially in professional, academic, or social interactions where age or experience differences exist. This reflects negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which aim to avoid imposition and acknowledge social hierarchy. Third, the use of “Mas” can also function as an identity and cultural marker. For Javanese speakers, continuing to use “Mas” in everyday interactions, even

in mixed-ethnic or urban environments, reinforces a shared cultural heritage and signals group belonging.

Finally, the continued usage of “Mas” in male language is strongly connected to the value placed on harmony in interaction. Within student communities, the term often appears as a way to keep conversations respectful while maintaining a sense of closeness. When used among peers, “Mas” can reduce the possibility of misunderstanding or conflict, since it subtly acknowledges the other person’s position without sounding overly formal. Many male students rely on this address when asking for help, seeking advice, or showing appreciation, because it conveys both politeness and friendliness at the same time. In this way, “Mas” is not only a cultural expression but also a practical strategy that helps speakers maintain cooperative and smooth relationships in their daily communication.

“Pak” which was chosen by 29 out of 58 respondents gave the situation of a wise condition to the addressee. The use of “Pak” is usually done by male teenagers to male adult because the naming of “Pak” can be of everyone that categorized as a male adult, naming male teenagers to the male adults also. The use of the honorific “Pak” as a form of address between males, especially in Indonesian sociolinguistic contexts, can be explained through its cultural, hierarchical, and pragmatic functions.

First, “Pak” is an abbreviation of *Bapak*, which literally means “father” in Indonesian but is widely used as a respectful title for adult men, regardless of familial relationship. Its use stems from Indonesian politeness norms, which emphasize age, social hierarchy, and respect for seniority in interpersonal communication (Sneddon, 2003). Addressing someone as “Pak” recognizes their hierarchy, status, maturity, or authority and aligns with cultural expectations of deference toward elders or those in higher positions.

Second, in male-to-male interactions, “Pak” functions as a formal and polite address, particularly in academic, professional, or official contexts. At Universitas Pamulang, for example, students predominantly use *Pak* when addressing lecturers, older male staff members, and also male cleaning service administrators. However, the same term may also surface in peer talk, often with humorous intent, such as exaggerating a friend’s seriousness by calling *Pak*. This flexibility highlights the pragmatic adaptability of honorifics, as Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue that honorific terms can serve both serious and playful roles depending on interactional goals. The use of “Pak” among male students, therefore, signals not just politeness but also the ability to navigate between hierarchy and camaraderie in daily exchanges.

Third, the use of “Pak” transcends its literal kinship sense and is often deployed strategically to maintain harmonious relationships in Indonesian society. Because it indexes deference and recognition of status, calling someone “Pak” helps to reduce potential friction in interaction. Among students, this is evident when juniors speak to seniors, or when one student wants to make a request without sounding demanding. The term serves as a politeness device that preserves the balance between authority and solidarity, resonating with Holmes’s (2013) claim that address terms are central in managing interpersonal relationships. In this context, *Pak* demonstrates how

traditional forms of respect continue to be important resources for achieving smooth and cooperative communication.

Lastly, for many male speakers, “Pak” is not only a politeness marker but also an identity signal that reinforces their role within a respectful and hierarchical speech community. The act of using “Pak” acknowledges that titles and honorifics remain integral to Indonesian linguistic etiquette, where mutual respect and order are highly valued. In student life, this is reflected in how males consciously alternate between formal and informal address terms, signaling their awareness of when hierarchy needs to be upheld and when it can be relaxed. Such choices underline the social importance of “Pak” as both a linguistic norm and a cultural identity marker. By drawing on this form, male students demonstrate their participation in a speech community that prioritizes mutual respect, collective harmony, and social stability.

“Om” can be categorized as one of naming used by male. The chosen of “Om” as an honorific address was chosen by 16 out of 58 respondents. Some people chose “Om” as one of special naming for them. “Om” was originally the Indonesian name for a family name as “the brother of our father or mother”. Om can be translated to “Uncle” in the English language. In the past, the use of “om” was only given to family members for their niece or nephew. But nowadays, the use of “om” can be named for anyone even they were not having the same blood as family. This was because of the degradation of level on closeness between social life that can make “Om” was not as special as before.

“Om” is often understood as an address term that promotes togetherness among males, strengthening the sense of familiarity and shared identity in interaction. Within male peer groups, calling someone *Om* creates an informal bond, softening social barriers that might otherwise emerge due to age or seniority. This usage demonstrates how address terms can serve as tools for establishing solidarity, as noted by Holmes (2013), who explains that speakers often rely on informal titles to emphasize in-group membership. By using “Om”, male students strategically balance the need for respect with the desire for closeness, highlighting the flexible role of honorifics in shaping social relationships.

First, “Om” literally means “uncle” in Indonesian and originates from the Dutch word *oom*, reflecting the colonial history of language borrowing. Despite this foreign origin, the term has been fully integrated into Indonesian daily use and is widely accepted as a local form of address. Within contemporary student settings, the borrowing illustrates what Wardhaugh (2010) calls the “naturalization” of linguistic forms, where loanwords become indistinguishable from native vocabulary due to frequent social usage. Thus, “Om” not only retains its literal meaning of “uncle” but also develops broader connotations of male seniority and respectful familiarity across different communities.

Second, in male-to-male interactions, “Om” is less formal than *Pak* but more respectful than using a first name, making it suitable for contexts where there is social familiarity without full intimacy. Among students, this balance is particularly important: calling a senior “Pak” might feel overly formal, while using only a first

name could risk sounding too casual. In such cases, “Om” provides a middle ground that conveys warmth and friendliness while still acknowledging differences in age or experience. This pragmatic function shows that address terms are not merely labels but nuanced choices speakers make to manage relationships, a point emphasized by Kádár and Haugh (2013).

Third, “Om” often carries cultural connotations of masculinity and maturity. When male students use it with one another, they indirectly position the addressee as an older, wiser, or more experienced figure, even if the age difference is not significant. This symbolic association reflects broader Indonesian cultural patterns where titles linked to family roles, such as “Om”, “Mas”, or “Pak”, signal not just kinship but also attributes of responsibility and authority. In this sense, “Om” serves as both a linguistic marker and a cultural metaphor, aligning everyday speech with expectations about masculine roles and social order.

Lastly, “om” has a pragmatic role in reducing social distance while maintaining politeness. Male students often employ the term when they want to keep interactions friendly yet respectful, for instance, when addressing older peers, mentors, or acquaintances outside their immediate circle. Its usage demonstrates that speakers can express camaraderie without undermining social hierarchy, which aligns with Holmes’s (2013) view that address forms often function to manage the delicate balance between solidarity and deference. By adopting “Om” in these contexts, students reveal their awareness of how language can simultaneously affirm respect, preserve harmony, and reinforce masculine bonding in academic and social life.

The use of “Kak” was rarely chosen by the respondent for about 14 out of 58 respondents. The naming of “Kak” was an abbreviation of “Kakak”. “Kak” here was the translation of “brother or sister”. Previously, the term “Kak” was only used by family members. It can be for siblings or the extended family. Nowadays, the use of “Kak” is spreading to the social class, known as one of the honorifics for general users. The use of “Kak” indicates the politeness between users, even for strangers. This was one of the modern culture among the people who use it.

The use of the honorific “Kak” as a form of address between males in Indonesian can be explained through age hierarchy, kinship extension, and politeness strategies in sociolinguistic interaction. While at first glance it may appear to be a simple kinship term, its application outside of the family demonstrates the adaptability of cultural forms in everyday communication. Among male students, calling someone “Kak” marks not only a recognition of seniority but also a willingness to maintain respectful and smooth interaction. This illustrates Holmes’s (2013) observation that address terms often serve as both relational markers and politeness strategies, shaping how speakers position themselves in social hierarchies.

First, “Kak” which is from the *kakak* word in Indonesian, meaning “older sibling” originates from kinship terminology used in family settings. In Indonesian culture, kinship terms are often extended beyond biological relationships to address non-relatives as a way of maintaining social harmony and showing respect (Sneddon, 2003). This is especially common in informal yet polite male-to-male interactions.

Second, when a male uses “Kak” to address another male, it signals acknowledgment of the other’s higher age or seniority, functioning as a respect marker without invoking the greater formality of terms like “Pak”. In peer settings, especially on campus, this allows juniors to show deference while keeping interactions friendly and informal. It is particularly common in mentoring situations, where underclassmen approach older students for guidance and advice. This demonstrates what Kádár and Haugh (2013) describe as the relational function of honorifics, which enable speakers to balance hierarchy with solidarity. Thus, “Kak” positions the addressee as respected but still approachable, maintaining harmony in the interaction.

Third, “Kak” is also associated with affection and familiarity. While “Pak” or “Om” may imply a generational gap, “Kak” places the addressee in a “slightly older but still peer-like” position. This helps reduce social distance in male-to-male communication, especially among friends, colleagues, or community members.

Finally, the gender dynamics are also relevant. In many Indonesian male speech communities, using *Kak* between men not only follows politeness norms but also affirms group identity. By calling one another “Kak”, male students demonstrate their awareness of cultural expectations while signaling that they belong to a collective that values respect, solidarity, and harmony. The practice also contrasts with other honorifics like “Bro” or “Om”, which may carry more casual or masculine connotations. In this sense, “Kak” functions as a marker of inclusiveness, reflecting how Indonesian males negotiate their roles within both hierarchical and egalitarian frameworks.

“Kang” was the least chosen by the respondent chose with per total of 5 out of 58 respondents. “Kang” was the naming of Sundanese name for a male, with the translation of “brother” in English. The use of “Kang” was one of the polite honorific addresses for the Sundanese people among men. “Kang” is usually used for giving an honorific address from younger men to older men to show politeness.

The use of the honorific "Kang" as a form of address between males can be understood from both a cultural and sociolinguistic perspective. "Kang" originates from Sundanese, a language spoken primarily in West Java, Indonesia, where it functions as a polite and affectionate form of address for an older brother, male elder, or respected male peer (Sneddon, 2003). When used in broader Indonesian contexts, it carries connotations of Sundanese heritage, signaling the speaker’s cultural background and regional pride. This ethnic and cultural identity factor makes "Kang" a marker of in-group belonging. Within male-to-male interactions, "Kang" balances familiarity with respect. Unlike more formal honorifics like “Bapak” or “Pak”, it does not create excessive social distance. Instead, it maintains warmth while still acknowledging status, age, or seniority. This combination of solidarity and hierarchy is a key feature of honorific use in Indonesian sociolinguistics

In male language practices, "Kang" functions as a pragmatic tool for building rapport while upholding politeness norms. Holmes (2013) notes that address terms often act as linguistic strategies to negotiate relationships, and "Kang" fits this pattern softening potential formality while keeping interactions respectful. The term has also

been popularized through Indonesian media, entertainment, and social networks, which reinforce its association with friendly masculinity and approachable authority.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the types of honorific addresses used in male communication at Universitas Pamulang. The findings reveal that male speakers employ a diverse repertoire of address terms, ranging from culturally rooted forms such as *Bang*, *Mas*, *Pak*, *Kak*, and *Kang*, to generational and institutional forms like *Om*, as well as more contemporary and informal expressions such as *Bro* and *Ngab*. These honorifics are not used arbitrarily, but rather serve to negotiate respect, closeness, solidarity, and hierarchy in everyday interaction.

The analysis demonstrates that traditional honorifics continue to hold strong cultural significance while being adapted to new contexts, particularly in academic and peer-group settings. At the same time, modern and globally influenced terms show how younger generations innovate with language to create identity and group belonging. This dynamic interplay highlights the fluid nature of address terms in Indonesian male communication, where both respect for tradition and contemporary youth culture coexist.

In conclusion, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on honorifics by documenting the categories of male honorific use in an academic environment. While previous research has emphasized honorific meanings or reasons, this article focuses specifically on types, thereby filling a gap in the literature. Future studies may extend this research by comparing honorific usage across genders, disciplines, or institutions, in order to better understand how social and cultural contexts influence patterns of address in Indonesian society.

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