The 'African type(s)' of pronominal honorification

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Honorification encompasses various strategies that encode paradigmatically social deixis distinctions between speakers and other referents (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987: 198-204). The manipulation of pronominal forms for such ends is cross-linguistically widespread. Yet, consider the following summary of the distribution of second-person pronominal honorification systems in a recent volume on (im)politeness in language: "Apart from Europe such distinctions exist in South-east Asia, India and perhaps Central America but they are not attested in North and South America, North Asia, Australia or Papua New Guinea" (Jucker & Kopczyk 2017: 439). The omission of the world's second largest populated continent, home to a third of the planet's languages, is all the more unfortunate in light of how Africa was described half a century ago: "the African honorific pronoun systems differ from many systems found in other parts of the world" (Gregersen 1974: 51). The primary aim of this panel is to fill the very literal gap in the appraisal of pronominal honorification by inviting descriptions that illustrate this phenomenon in African languages.

That Europe is recurrently described as a "hotbed" for languages with a politeness distinction in the pronominal system (Helmbrecht 2013; Jucker & Kopczyk 2017: 439) has much do with a historical research bias towards these languages, both in the sampling methodology and by focussing on the type of pronominal honorification commonly attested in them (see Helmbrecht 2002). The one type common to European languages is *addressee* honorification and typically involves the extension of the second-person plural pronoun to a singular addressee in particular social contexts. It has been dubbed the *tu/vous* or even 'European type'. Yet, it is well attested in African languages, including Amharic (Leslau 1995: 46f), Kambaata (Treis 2008: 330ff), Makhuwa (Maughim 1898: 7-8), and Makwe (Devos 2008: 163), to name but a few. An example from Gbaya is given in (1).

(1)   Gbaya 'bodoe (Ubangi, Niger-Congo; adapted from Roulon-Doko 1997: 87)
Ɂá mὲ tɛ́-, Ɂὲὲ nɛ́ … **mɛ́** tɛ́- dùk nù   sààyé Ɂὲnὲmɛ́ ná
INTJ 2SG come 1PL go   2SG come stay ground village alone   NEG
(Mother to daughter) "Ah [tu] viens, allons-y … tu ne resteras pas seule au village."

wòóyὲé ! nàà,   **Ɂὲnὲ**   nɛ́
no   mother 2PL.HON go
(Daughter to mother) "Non, maman, allez-y."

A typology of the form and function of repertoires and styles necessitates a thorough appraisal of the African type(s) of pronominal honorification strategies. Common to all of the languages listed above is the second type of pronominal honorification, namely *referent* honorification. In Gbaya, this involves incorporating the system of logophoric plural pronouns (Roulon-Doko 1997: 88). In many Bantu languages, referent honorification involves manipulating the agreement pattern typically triggered by a noun. In Bantu gender systems, most human nouns belong to the so-called human gender and as such trigger Class 1 (singular) and Class 2 (plural) agreement patterns, realised as prefixes that are marked on a range of targets. In some Bantu languages, speakers paradigmatically encode politeness levels by

using the Class 2 agreement pattern when talking about an individual, as exemplified by Fwe in (2) and (3) (also e.g. Irvine 1998 54-55 for Bemba; see also Storch & Dimmendaal 2014: 17-21). This strategy is also part of expressions using the subjunctive mood to make imperatives more polite, as in (4) for Haya (see Devos & van Olmen 2013).

(2)   Fwe (Bantu K40, Niger-Congo; Gunnink 2018: 117)
ba-zyib-ehere
CL2-know-NEUT.STAT
'S/he is well-known.' (person older than ego)

(3)   Fwe (Bantu K40, Niger-Congo; Gunnink 2018: 117)
*haiba   **ba**-mu-kéntu   u-angu   **ba**-kewsi   n-nyazi   mbo-ndi-**ba**-kan-e*
when   CL2-CL1-wife   CL1-POSS1   CL2-have   CL9-lover   NFUT-1SG-CL2-refuse-PFV.SBJV
'If my wife has a lover, I will divorce her.'

(4)   Haya (Bantu J20, Niger-Congo; Lehman 1977: 147, cited in Devos & van Olmen 2013)
ba-m-p-é   o-mw-óono
CL2-1SG-give-SBJV   AUG-CL3-salt
'Give me salt!' (polite)

A different kind of pronominal honorification is found in Akan: "personal pronouns systematically undergo lexical tone changes in the environment of the different subclasses of kinship noun" (Boadi 2000: 121). This can be seen in possessive constructions with pronominal modifiers, as in (5).

(5)   Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo; Boadi 2000: 121)
a.   *mé wɔ̀fa*   'my uncle'   b.   *mè bá*   'my child'
     mé ni   'my mother'   *mèwɔ̀faasé*   'my niece/nephew'
     mé kùne   'my husband   *nè yére*   'his wife'

Internal and external language dynamics are important dimensions in the extant literature on pronominal honorification. Concerning African languages, it has been suggested – albeit tentatively – that addressee honorification in African languages might be due to contact with certain European languages like French which spread as a result of colonialism (Helmbrecht 2003: 197). Whilst I side with Gregersen (1974: 54; also Aikhenvald 2010: 219) that the "the notion of plurality is vivid enough […] in conveying the notion of social distance to permit multiple convergence in many parts of the world", the question of contact is worthy of further investigation. In the eastern Kalahari, contact has resulted in the replication of the 'Bantu type' system in some Kalahari Khoe languages (Khoe-Kwadi). This is illustrated in (6) where honorific concord is made using the 3rd-person common gender plural person-gender-number suffix *-re* in a the same way agreement class 2 is used in Bantu languages across southern Africa (Pratchett 2020: 46-49; see also Treis 2008 for the influence of Amharic on Kambaata).

(6)   Tshwa (Kalahari Khoe, Khoe-Kwadi: Pratchett 2020: 47)
*Ranamane-**re**   tana   ǁxau   Radinoko-m   djoro   oa   xa-**re**   na-ba |hoo*
PN-PL.HON   then   chase   PN-M.SG.GEN   back   LOC   DEM-PL.HON   DEM-M.SG.ACC   run
'Ranamane_j then chased after Radinoko_k and he_j ran after him_k [...].'

Almost half a century after Gregersen's (1974) call for a holistic description of honorification in African languages, this panel serves as an opportunity to assert the contribution of African languages to the typology of pronominal honorification. Contributions on the themes illustrated above or related to any of the following topics are welcome (with the option to produce a joint volume if there is enough interest):

- pronominal honorification in individual languages, incl. corpus-based studies
- diachrony of honorific pronouns in African languages
- variation in pronominal honorification strategies within languages/language areas
- pronominal honorification systems arising due to contact (with African/non-African languages)
- acquisition of pronominal honorification systems
- descriptions of how such systems they used by speakers/social dynamics
- other novel descriptions of strategies for encoding social deixis in African languages will also be considered

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Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative	NFUT	Near future
AUG	Augment	PFV	Perfective
CL	Agreement class	PL	Plural
DEM	Demonstrative	PN	Proper noun
GEN	Genitive	POSS	Possessive
HON	Honorific	SBJV	Subjunctive
LOC	Locative	SG	Singular
M	Masculine	STAT	Stative
NEUT	Neuter		

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