

11. Vocatives, Honor Conventions and Interjections

1. Vocatives (Forms of Address)

The simplest way of addressing is to elongate the vowel at the end of a word as shown below.

Nominative	Vocative
A మ a-mma mother	A మ్ a-mmA! mom!
• nA-nna father	°! nA-nnA! dad!
sI-ta Sita	! sI-tA! Sita!
A శ a-kka sister	Aఉశ! a-kkA! sister!
bA-va bro-in-law	! bA-vA! bro-in-law!
va-di-na sis-in-law	! va-di-nA! sis-in-law!

Notice how Indians address their kith and kin; it is not by their given names as we do in the West, but by the relationship. In idiomatic Telugu, you will find a rich treasure of addressing (vocative) terms. Mastering the use of vocatives in Telugu is not just a matter of mastering the rules of grammar. Vocatives are imbued with a complex socio-linguistic meaning. The way people address each other depends on the type of relationship that exists between them. These rules dictate how a master addresses a servant, a devotee addresses God, wife addresses husband, siblings and colleagues address each other, and so on. In this book, for want of better terms, we use terms like familiar, respectful, intimate, intermediate, polite, honorary, and so on, to indicate the type of relationship implied in the addressing. Notice some of the vocatives are gender-neutral. It is recommended that the student stick to the style indicated in bold, which is gender neutral.

Vocatives in Telugu are usually expressed by optionally prefixing the noun with prefixes like **ఓ** (orEy^), **ఓ** (EmOy^), (EmaMDI), etc., and by optionally elongating the vowel sound at the end of the name, or with the additional suffix **డు**, (gA-ru) as an honorific. If **డు** (gA-ru) is used, then the vowel 'u' is elongated in the vocative. This **డు** suffix is almost identical in function to the Japanese san.

Example. 1: Masculine Noun,

...Telugu.....	...Pronunciation in RTS.....	..Example...
ఓ !	o-rEy^! rA-mu-DU!	Hey, Ramudu! (very familiar/master to servant)
!	EM rA! rA-mu-DU!	Hey, Ramudu! (very familiar/master to servant)
ఓ !	Ey^! rA-mu-DU!	Hey, Ramudu! (familiar)
!	rA-mu-DU!	Hi, Ramudu! (familiar)

ఓ !	E-mOy^! rA-mu-DU!	Hello, Ramudu! (affectionate)
!	rA-mu-Du gA-rU!	Hello, Ramudu! (respectful)
,	E-maM-DI rA-mu-Du gArU	Hello Sir, Ramudu (very respectful)
ఓ ,	E-maM-DOy^ rA-mu-Du gArU	Hello Sir, Ramudu (very respectful)

Example. 2: Feminine Noun,

...Telugu.....	...Pronunciation in RTS.....	..Example...
0 ఓ ! !	o-sEy^! sI-tA!	Hey, Sita! (very familiar)
! !	E-mE! sI-tA!	Hey, Sita! (very familiar)
ఓ ! !	Ey^! sI-tA!	Hey, Sita! (familiar)
!	sI-tA!	sItA! (familiar)
ఘ !	Ema-mmA! sItA!	Hello, Sita! (affectionate)
!	sI-ta gA-rU!	Sita! (respectful)
! !	E-maM-DI! sI-ta gA-rU!	Hello Madam, Sita! (very respectful)
ఓ !	! E-maM-DOy^! sI-ta gA-rU!	Hello, Madam Sita (very respectful)

Note 1. In both the above examples, the social convention of observing the rank is followed. The first two lines of each example are meant for addressing intimate people or people well below their social rank (such as a master to a servant). The next two lines are the vocatives for use among equal-rank people. The last two are used to show respect.

Caution. Never use 0 ఓ (o-rEy) and 0 ఓ (o-sEy) in addressing people unless and until you know thoroughly the honorific social conventions. They are used only in extremely intimate relationships or when the social or kinship rank of the one being addressed is much lower than the one who is doing the addressing. Even in intimate relationships, it is becoming common to use ఓ (E-mOy) instead of 0 ఓ and ఘ(E-ma-mmA) instead of 0 ఓ . The novice is also advised to use the (gA-ru) suffix. Just elongate the ending vowel as (gA-rU) to make it vocative.

Although rarely used in conversational Telugu, two other vocative forms, namely (O-rI) and (O-sI) are useful in dramatic contexts:

Masc. ! ఘ, O-rI! du-rA-tmA! You! Wicked fellow!

Fem. ! ఘ ! O-sI! pA-pA-tmu-rAlA! You! Sinner!

Needless to emphasize that (O-rI) and 0 ఓ (o-rEy^) are used in the masculine context and and 0 ఓ are used in the feminine context.

Note 2. The suffix (gA-ru) is common to both masculine and feminine, but they are never used

when the addressing is done with and 0 or and 0 . Such usage makes the phrase an oxymoron and is just plain awkward.

2.1 Honor Conventions

Extreme care must be exercised in the use of pronouns, because each pronoun has a different honorific social value. One can easily feel insulted if the conventions are not followed.

(a) In normal usage, (mI-ru) is the pronoun to address one's seniors, as well as one's peers and others whom one addresses on equal terms.

A person toward whom one uses should usually be referred to, if absent, with the plural pronominal form (vA-ru) or (A-ya-na) and a plural verb; but, if present, either with (vI-ru) or (I-ya-na).

(b) The usage of (ta-ma-ru) is a little bit tricky. In terms of honorific value, it is one notch above (mI-ru). If mis-used, it may sound un-natural and could be interpreted as a mark of conceited respect or mocking respect. One hears the usage of this in highly formal occasions like weddings, religious functions, and so on.

(c) The usage of (a-u-vvu) shows great intimacy and informality, and also when one addresses servants or people of lower rank. Siblings and friends can use this to address each other. A husband uses this intimate pronoun to address his wife, although a wife addresses her husband using the honorific (mI-ru). Typically deities are also addressed using this intimate pronoun. It is in this specialized instance the vocative 0 (o-rEy^!) also is frequently used.

Example 0 ! N !, o-rEy^!, veM-ka-Ta ra-ma-Na mU-rtI! da-ya cU-piM-ca-rA! = O! Lord Venkataramana Murthy! Show mercy!

2.2 Honorific Particles (gA-ru), A (aMDi) etc.

(a) In addressing a person (male or female) to whom one uses (mI-ru), or (ta-ma-ru), the honorific particle (gA-ru), may be suffixed to the last name or first name.

Example.

! E U • ?, Rao, sir! How are you?

! • ?, Susila, madam! Are you well?

Here, notice first that the honorific particle (gA-ru) is appended to the name (rA-vu). Because Rao is being addressed, the final vowel of the appended particle is elongated to (gA-rU) to bring in the vocative case. Finally the concordance with the verb is observed by using the plural (respectful form) of the verb, namely U • (u-nnA-ru) rather than U • (u-nnA-vu).

(b) Another honorific particle that is often appended in conversations is **A** (aM-Di). The closest English equivalent to this word is either "sir" or "madam." One can safely use this **A** while talking to anyone whom one normally addresses with the pronouns (mI-ru) or (ta-ma-ru).

A , a-vu-naM-Di. = yes, sir / yes, madam

U , kA-daM-Di = no, sir / no, madam

E , lE-daM-Di = no, sir (no, madam), do not have it

U , cU-piM-caM-Di = please show me sir/madam

(c) Another honorific particle that is often prefixed to the opening sentence, in conversations, is **A** = + **A** . The closest English equivalent to this word is either "hello sir" or "hello madam." One can safely use this type of addressing, **A** , while talking to anyone whom one normally addresses with **A** or **A** ..

Example.

A , **E** **U** • ? What sir, Rao, sir, how are you?

(d) Telugu uses **l** (SrI), **l** (srI-ma-ti) and **p** (ku-mAri) respectively in the places of Mr., Mrs. and Miss. Telugu speaking people have not yet invented the equivalent of Ms. Professors can be addressed with **l** (A-cA-rya). The equivalent of 'Respected Sir' is **l** (mA-nya-SrI).

(e) Finally the semi-honorific method of addressing, quite common among young adults, are **A** (gu-rU) and **A** (gu-ru-vu gA-rU) used mostly in conversational addressing. The first two are typically used in the 'familiar' mode and the later in the 'respectful' mode. This has the strange connotation of familiarity, yet an air of respect. This is rarely used in writing.

2.3 Concordance with Verb

(a) As mentioned earlier, it is important to observe the concordance of the pronoun with the verb. If the honorific **A** or **A** is used or implied in the earlier part of a sentence, then the corresponding verb typically ends in a (ru). If, on the other hand, the word **A** (a-vu-vvu) is used or implied, the corresponding verb ends in ithr , , .(vu, Du, di). A simple example is given below. More elaborate discussion follows in a subsequent chapter.

Masc. honorific. **A** , **E** • ?

or, **A** , **E** • ?

Masc. familiar. **A** , **E** **U** • ?

or, **A** ! , **E** **U** • ?

Masc. very familiar. , E U ° ?

or, O E U ° ?

Fem. honorific. U , E U ° ?

or, , U ! E U ° ?

Fem. familiar. U ! E U ° ?

Fem. very familiar. ! U ! E U ° ?

(b) A modern trend popular with broadcast and print media is to drop the (gA-ru) altogether but keep the honorific verb ending while talking in third person. That is, in modern usage it is permissible to use a plural verb form with a singular subject.

᳚ A ° , ne-hrU a-nnA-ru, Nehru said.

᳚ ᳚ , iM-di-rA gAM-dhI pra-ka-TiM-cE-ru, Indira Gandhi announced.

(c) However, while talking about historical people, the honorific suffixes are rarely used.

᳚ A ° , kA-Li-dA-su a-nnA-Du, Kalidasu said.

3 Interjections

Conversational Telugu is replete with interjections. Some examples are given below.

...Telugu.....	...Pronunciation in RTS.....	..Example...
A ᳚!	a-yyO!	Alas!
A ᳚ ᳚!	a-yya-yyO!	Alas! Indeed!
!	O-hO!	Oh! / Is that so!
A ᳚	a-yyO! pA-paM	Alas! What a shame!
A ౩!	a-bbA!	Ouch!
A !	a-re-re!	Oops!
!	sa-rE!	OK!
A !	a-lA-gE!	So it will be!
A ?	a-ppu-DE?	Already?
᳚ !	i-di-gO!	Here it is!
᳚ !	i-Du-gO!	Here he is!
A !	a-Du-gO!	There he is! (familiar)
A !	a-ru-gO!	There they are!
A» !	a-lla-di-gO!	Over there it is!

4 Exercises

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