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Address Practice As Social Action: European Perspectives

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Introduction: Address as Social Action Across Cultures and Contexts

Catrin Norrby and Camilla Wide

Abstract: The introduction provides a brief overview of address research, particularly focusing on address practices in Europe. It also serves to contextualize the six chapters of the volume, all of which present up-to-date empirical research of address and social relations in a variety of contexts and languages including Dutch, French, Finnish, German, Italian and Swedish.

Keywords: European languages; pragmatics; address; social relationships; interpersonal relationships

1 Address practices in Europe

The way we address one another is crucial for establishing and maintaining social relationships. In our daily encounters, we regulate the level of social distance between us and our fellow interlocutors through our choice of address terms such as pronouns, first names, last names and titles. Our choice is also guided by the level of formality of the situation and the particular context – we use different address terms in a work interview and when having dinner with friends. English only has one address pronoun (*you*), but it nevertheless has many words and expressions for marking interpersonal relationships. For example, one and the same person can be addressed by different interlocutors such as *Sue*, *Susan* or *Ms Smith*, revealing different levels of familiarity and affinity with the addressee. Similarly, getting somebody’s attention with *Hey you* or with *Excuse me, Madam* would most likely be interpreted very differently in terms of politeness and formality.

Many other languages make a distinction between a familiar/informal address pronoun, often referred to as ‘T’ from Latin *tu*, and a ‘polite’ or more formal counterpart, labelled ‘V’ from Latin *vos* (Brown and Gilman, 1960, p. 254). However, the selection of one particular address pronoun over another – what is considered the ‘right’ form of address in a particular situation – varies over time, across speech communities, social networks, and even according to individual preference (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). In other words, address in a given language is not a static system but is better understood as a dynamic resource for negotiating and establishing social relationships in interaction that resonates with the overall sociocultural values of a particular speech community, social network or community of practice.

In continental Europe, V address is generally used as the ‘default’ address (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009) to strangers and between interlocutors who are not family or close friends. It marks more formal or distant relationships and is usually interpreted as a ‘polite’ or neutral form of address, while T address is reserved for more long-term and closer relationships. In Scandinavia, V address was used in a somewhat similar way as in continental Europe until around 50 years ago. Since then the use of V address has drastically declined. This has been partly as an outcome of the egalitarian and democratic ideals that gained ground in Scandinavia from the 1960s onwards (Paulston, 1976), and also because V address was not unequivocally seen as a polite form in
all situations. For example, in Sweden, V address could be used to mark social inferiority (see Chapters 3 and 4 in this volume). As pointed out by Fredsted (2005, p. 159), ‘[i]t is not good “tone” in the Scandinavian welfare states to show off, demonstrate wealth or superiority’.

T address has now become the default form in almost all situations in Scandinavia, even though there is some variation across countries. In Denmark and Finland in particular, V address has been maintained to some extent, especially in situations such as service encounters. This has resulted in an intricate system where the choice between T and V is governed by a number of factors that may vary between different age groups, different regions, different social groups but also between individual speakers (see, for example, Trap-Jensen, 1995; Hickey and Stewart, 2005, chapters 10–12; Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). In Finland, where Finnish and Swedish are spoken, both T and V address can be received as either neutral, polite or impolite in service encounters and other similar situations. Not surprisingly, a quite common strategy in Finland (especially in Finnish but also in Finland Swedish) is to avoid direct address and use various types of impersonal constructions instead (see Yli-Vakkuri, 2005). This and other phenomena connected to the ambivalent status of V address as a polite form illustrate the differences between address patterns in Scandinavia and continental Europe. These distinctions need be taken into consideration when comparisons are made between these two parts of Europe.

2 Research on address

The beginnings of address research are often associated with the publication of Brown and Gilman’s 1960 article ‘The pronouns of power and solidarity’ and their distinction between ‘polite’ V address pronouns and ‘familiar’ T pronouns (Brown and Gilman, 1960). They linked V and T pronouns to the dichotomy of ‘power’ and ‘solidarity’, thought to be universal, where reciprocal use of T or V was interpreted as what they called a ‘solidarity semantic’, and non-reciprocal use of V by one interlocutor and T by the other was represented as a ‘power semantic’. Their model has stimulated much research, but it has also been criticized for making too far-reaching, even universal, claims based on limited empirical data drawn exclusively from major European languages with a binary T/V distinction (Braun, 1988; Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990).
As shown by Braun (1988), for example, many languages boast a range of address pronouns and do not fit into a dichotomy such as the one proposed by Brown and Gilman. A significant aspect of Brown and Gilman’s work is their prediction that reciprocal use of informal T (the solidarity dimension) would eventually replace non-reciprocal T/V (the power dimension). Broadly speaking, such a generalization rings true with the development in many Western nations over the past 50–60 years, where movements away from hierarchical towards more egalitarian and democratic societies have developed hand in hand with a more informal, even intimate, tone in public discourse. While this general informalization of ways of speaking and acting extends also to address conventions in the languages and speech communities investigated in this volume, the research reported in the six chapters also demonstrates that the situation is far more complex and contradictory.

Brown and Gilman’s study precedes the advent of sociolinguistics with its focus on social categories such as class, age and gender. Sociolinguistics brought an interest in the variation in address usage and argued that different social groups within the same speech community might adhere to different rules of use (Ervin-Tripp, 1986; Paulston, 1976). In particular, this would be the case in times of transition. Take, for example, the rapid shift towards general use of T address in Swedish society in the late 1960s and early 1970s where some groups reserved T for friends and family, while others extended T much more broadly (Paulston, 1976). While ongoing change in address practices might eventually lead to a new shared and ‘stable’ usage – as predicted by Brown and Gilman – there is also evidence of cyclical development. In their study on styles of address in French, German and Swedish, Clyne, Norrby and Warren (2009) showed that the widespread use of T address in the 1960s as part of the student movement in Europe has since diminished in French and German. It is now found in limited use among networks of ‘like-minded’ people – belonging to the same sports club, or being part of the same street demonstration, for example, can trigger T address – and in the university domain (pp. 160–1).

Sociolinguistics has seen a development from large-scale studies of variation in the ways people use language in their speech communities towards smaller-scale investigations focusing on interactional and contextual details. This shift in focus is also evident in address research where more recent studies have explored the address choices participants make in a variety of contexts and with different
interlocutors. These studies have used a range of methods for observing and recording the address terms people use, including canvassing their reported use and their attitudes towards address through questionnaires, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and participant observation (see, for example, Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009), as well as the analysis of actual address use in interaction (see, for example, Gardner-Chloros, 2007; Norrby, Wide, Lindström and Nilsson, 2015). Similarly, the chapters of this volume make use of a variety of methods, with a clear leaning towards analysing address practice in actual interactions.

Given that address is a powerful instrument for marking social relationships, it involves issues of politeness (for example, Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Watts, 2003), perceptions of common ground (Clark, 1996; Svennevig, 1999) and social distance (Brown and Levinson, 1987; see also Svennevig, 1999, for social distance as a multidimensional concept involving the dimensions of solidarity, familiarity and affect). In their model, Brown and Gilman interpreted social distance as the non-hierarchical ‘solidarity’ dimension, leading to reciprocal address use – interlocutors using the same address terms. Difference in status and power relations would lead to non-reciprocal use, with a more ‘powerful’ speaker using T to address somebody further down the rungs of hierarchy but expecting a ‘respectful’ V back.

While such power semantics were more commonplace in the past, other parameters such as style and identity have surfaced as important for the choice of address. Following Agha’s work on person deixis (2007, pp. 278–9), we could say that conventional social meanings associated with a certain address form – for example, that German Sie or French vous (V pronouns) are ‘polite’ – are ‘taken up, challenged and renegotiated by individuals in their situated identity work’ (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 30). While use of Sie or vous would be the ‘default’, unmarked form of address to an adult stranger in German and French, at first encounter two strangers could use T with each other on the basis of perceived commonalities and a wish to express sameness and affinity. Clyne, Norrby and Warren (pp. 69–78) provide numerous examples of how individuals consider which address form to use by ‘reading’ the situation and the interlocutor, based on overt style and identity markers including clothing, accessories, hairstyle and general appearance as well as other more indirect ones, such as political orientation, religion, or taste in music to name a few.
3 The chapters in this volume

The chapters in this collection reflect the authors’ interest in the role of language as a form of action through which identities, social relations and group memberships are constructed and negotiated. They highlight the importance of investigating the everyday encounters and interactions that make up the social fabric of our lives. While some of the communities presented are characterized by general consensus and relatively stable address practices, others display heterogeneity and are sites of negotiation and even opposition. By comparing local, national and transnational address practices, this volume uncovers both commonalities and differences in the way social meaning is expressed and shaped through address.

The volume is distinctive in three main ways. First, it presents a selection of the latest research on address practices in a number of European languages. The overall aim is to increase our understanding of how address practices vary across languages, speech communities, situations and time, and the implications such variation has for cross-cultural communication – between speakers of different languages as well as speakers of different varieties of the same language.

Second, the majority of chapters focus on actual address usage in authentic written or spoken interactions. This is in contrast to most address research to date, which has focused on reported use and attitudes to address (for an overview see Norrby and Warren, 2012). In this sense, the volume fills a research gap by providing a long overdue analysis of actual address in a variety of activities and contexts. Together, the chapters contribute to a better understanding of address practice in a variety of European languages, ranging from widely spoken languages such as French, German and Italian to less widely used languages such as Dutch, Finnish and Swedish.

Third, the volume is innovative in that it explores a wide range of real-life and mediated interactional contexts: (a) audio and visual media – radio interviews, film commercials and feature films; (b) service encounters – in coffee houses and at theatre box offices; (c) computer-mediated communication in internet forums; and (d) academic interactions in a university setting. Variation in address choice is a central theme in all the chapters – the languages under investigation all have pronominal and nominal address terms, but the way these resources are put to work vary significantly across languages, speech communities
and settings. Some chapters highlight national variation in the address patterns of pluricentric languages – languages that have more than one national centre or official status in more than one country (Clyne, 1992). The focus is on national varieties of Dutch (Chapter 1), German (Chapter 2) and Swedish (Chapter 4). Others contrast address preferences in different languages (Chapter 5), in different locations and situations (Chapter 6), or document changes in address over time within the same speech community (Chapter 3).

In Chapter 1, Roel Vismans investigates address practices in conversations with Dutch and Flemish speakers. There are subtle differences between the northern – Netherlands – and southern – Flemish (Belgium) – parts of the Dutch-speaking area, both in terms of the actual address pronoun system and how the more formal and informal forms of address are used. To explore how these differences are realized in actual usage, the chapter analyses in-depth radio interviews between Dutch journalists and Flemish academics. In a qualitative analysis it tracks the development of the relationship between the speakers and their use of address forms, as well as other markers of (in)formality. It takes into account other possible factors affecting the interaction (age, gender, residence in the other country) and pays special attention to speakers’ commentary on the variation between informal pronominal address (T) and formal address (V). The chapter shows that the rules of engagement for address in the standard language (that is, when to use T and when to use V) are not the same in the Netherlands and Flanders. Dutch speakers from Flanders are more likely to use V forms in situations where speakers from the Netherlands use T forms. This is at least in part due to the fact that southern colloquial Dutch has regional forms of address that do not entirely match those of standard Dutch. The study thus adds to the growing evidence that Belgian Dutch continues to maintain its distinctiveness from the Netherlands norm.

In Chapter 2, Heinz L. Kretzenbacher and Doris Schüpbach present a case study on address practices based on a corpus of readers’ forums in German, Austrian and Swiss newspapers. Address in computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a relatively new field both in address research and in CMC research. This is partly due to the fact that the majority of CMC research has been carried out on (Standard) English, where address is not such an obvious phenomenon, given the language’s single address pronoun ‘you’. In contrast, German makes a distinction (and therefore requires a choice) between the formal V address pronoun Sie

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and informal T pronoun *du*. In offline interactions, *V* is the unmarked form of address between strangers. However, it has often been assumed that the German-speaking Internet would almost exclusively use T address. This is linked to a view of the Internet as a setting where users have a sense of belonging to a community based on affinity and common interests, naturally leading to T. However, as Kretzenbacher and Schüpbach show, this is not the case. The results of their study show that the majority of Internet posts actually do not use any explicit address at all, and in those cases where direct address appears, *V* is by far the most common form. The authors compare the three national varieties of German in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They find that *V* is the only direct form of address in Swiss forums and the most prevalent form in German forums, while Austrian forums display a more mixed picture. The authors conclude that the variation can be linked to factors other than national preference, including whether participants appear under a real name or a nickname, the individual preferences of contributors, as well as the type of forum.

In Chapter 3, Maria Fremer turns our attention to changes in address practices over time. The chapter documents how Swedish address forms underwent a radical change in address conventions in a matter of a few decades. Before the late 1960s, Swedish address was characterized by an intricate system of using *V* address, titles and last names to address those other than family and close friends, which was then replaced by a nearly universal use of the informal T form *du*. This change – commonly referred to as the *du*-reform – to a no-nonsense, egalitarian *du* represented a shift ‘from below’ (i.e., led and spread by the people) rather than being a prescribed reform ‘from above’, imposed by the government. Fremer’s study is based on commercials in the archival film collections of the Swedish Film Institute. These data provide a unique opportunity to analyse address forms in context, as they were used while the reform was taking place. By focusing on the first examples of *du* found outside of the intimate contexts of family and close friends, the chapter argues that certain contexts, like rhymes and songs, or the use of inner dialogue, facilitate the use of *du* where formal address for addressing the viewers otherwise would be expected. The general tendency in Sweden towards greater informality in public contexts as well as the radical political climate around 1970 changed not only the style of address, but also language in a more general sense, as well as the looks and behaviour of the protagonists in the film commercials studied. The chapter illustrates
how changes in address practices went hand in hand with a general tendency in society towards informality in terms of appearance, manners and language.

In Chapter 4, Catrin Norrby, Camilla Wide, Jenny Nilsson and Jan Lindström present a study of address practice and interpersonal relationships in Finland-Swedish and Sweden-Swedish service encounters. The chapter draws on new data collected within the bi-national comparative research programme Interaction and Variation in Pluricentric Languages: Communicative Patterns in Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish, which compares pragmatic and interactional patterns in the domains of service, higher education and healthcare. The chapter explores how staff and customers address each other in some 300 service encounters collected at theatre box offices and similar settings in Finland and Sweden. Address practices in the two datasets are compared both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. The data confirm some expected tendencies; for example, that T address is clearly the default pattern in Swedish and that V address is primarily used (to some extent) in Finland. A less expected result of the study is that, among customers, the biggest difference in use of T address exists between younger and older customers in Sweden, not between customers in the two countries. Among staff, the greatest variation in address practices can clearly be found among younger Finland-Swedish staff members, who use all the address patterns found in the data. The qualitative analysis also shows that T and V address can be used in the same service encounter, which further illustrates the dynamic character of address patterns in Swedish, and in Finland Swedish in particular.

Johanna Isosävi and Hanna Lappalainen’s Chapter 5 also examines service encounters, from a global perspective. The authors focus on Starbucks, an American multinational corporation that seeks to transfer informal American styles of interaction to its branches in other countries. They compare customers’ attitudes towards the use of first names in Starbucks cafés in Finland and France by examining Internet postings, observing authentic service situations, and interviewing waiters and clients. The comparison of Finland and France opens up several interesting perspectives. In Finland, the coffee chain had just opened its first cafés when Isosävi and Lappalainen collected their data (2012–2013), whereas the first cafés in France opened in 2004 – over ten years later, Starbucks is well established, with 39 cafés in Paris alone. T forms are generally favoured in Finnish address culture, but the use of first
names is often avoided, even in multi-party conversations. In France, V address, which is the default choice in institutional conversations, can be combined with first names in long-term service encounters, even though first names are typically not used. The authors’ examination of the social meanings and language ideologies related to the use of first names in Starbucks cafés reveals the complexities of transferring external, global norms of interaction into new local settings.

Chapter 6, by Maicol Formentelli and John Hajek, focuses on the social rituals of positioning self and others in the context of higher education. Recent studies have confirmed the importance of address in marking power and distance in higher education across languages and national varieties of the same language. However, up-to-date research is still limited for languages like Italian, where there is great individual, regional and stylistic variation both in the repertoire and in the use of pronominal address forms. This chapter offers the first detailed description of address practices in Italian academic interactions, based primarily on questionnaire responses from students at two small- and medium-sized universities in Northern Italy. The results show that the use of reciprocal V form Lei between lecturers and students is the main strategy to convey respect and social distance, along with lexical V forms (honorifics, titles, last names). At the same time, and somewhat unexpectedly, non-reciprocal address with an increasing use of T forms from lecturers to students also seems to be gaining ground. The authors argue that their findings confirm the recent claims of a gradual expansion of informality in Italian society. However, they also demonstrate a resistance to completely abandoning formality in education, where the explicit acknowledgement of the teacher’s authority through the use of V forms by students is still perceived as the natural reflection of different roles and age.

The volume concludes with reflections by Jane Warren that situate the empirical chapters in the broader context of address research. It outlines how each study contributes to the theme of the volume: address as a form of social action through which social and interpersonal relationships are encoded and negotiated in and across cultures and languages.

References


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Negotiating Address in a Pluricentric Language: Dutch/Flemish

Roel Vismans

Abstract: Dutch is a pluricentric language: in Europe, it is spoken in two different countries (the Netherlands in the north and Flanders, Belgium, in the south) with differing linguistic norms. Vismans investigates what happens when the northern and southern Dutch address systems meet. His data come from in-depth radio interviews between Dutch journalists and Flemish academics. In a qualitative analysis, he tracks the development of the relationship between the two speakers and their use of address forms, as well as other markers of (in)formality. The analysis also takes into account other possible factors affecting the interaction (age, gender, residence in the other country) and pays special attention to speakers’ commentary on the variation between familiar and formal second-person pronouns.

Keywords: Dutch; pluricentric language; address pronouns; radio interviews

1 Introduction

This chapter investigates what happens when the northern and southern Dutch address systems meet in interactions between a northern and a southern speaker. Since the late 1950s, Dutch pronominal address forms have been on the move, as they have in other languages. There has been a gradual shift away from the traditional non-reciprocal power semantic (Brown and Gilman, 1960) towards a reciprocal system in which the formal pronoun is used to express distance and the informal pronoun to express common ground (for example, Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). This shift was documented for Dutch by, among others, van den Toorn (1977, 1982) and is studied in-depth by Vermaas (2002; for a more recent study, see Vismans, 2013a). These and the vast majority of other studies of (changes in) the modern Dutch address pronouns are concerned with Dutch spoken in the Netherlands. However, Dutch is a pluricentric language – that is, a language that is spoken in two or more different, relatively self-contained jurisdictions whose linguistic norms may differ (compare Clyne, 1992). One of the characteristics of Dutch as a pluricentric language is that the use of address pronouns in its two main centres, the Netherlands and Flanders in Belgium, differs considerably.

The standard (northern) address forms comprise a formal pronoun (u), which can be used both in the singular and plural, and separate singular and plural informal forms. The singular informal forms have the most complex morphology with a salient distinction between stressed forms (jij, jou, jouw) and an unstressed forms (je), and the unstressed form doubles up as generic/impersonal pronoun. Whereas formally the southern standard language has the same forms, and non-dialectal colloquial speech in the north also follows the standard pattern, colloquial southern Dutch does not distinguish between T (informal) and V (formal), but only has the singular pronoun gij (unstressed ge) with the oblique and possessive forms u and uw, and there are regional variants of the plural pronoun. The full paradigm for both standard (northern) and colloquial southern Dutch is given in Table 1.1.

These regional differences in forms and their use can give rise to misunderstandings when northern and southern speakers meet. This chapter therefore aims to investigate the use of address forms and their interpretation in conversations between Dutch and Flemish people. The data for this research are based on three long interviews between a
Dutch journalist and a Flemish academic. The chapter opens with some reflections on the status of Dutch as a pluricentric language and the role of address in this. The interviews and their method of analysis are then described, followed by an analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study’s findings.

2 Dutch as a pluricentric language

The Dutch language area is discontinuous. In Europe, it comprises the Netherlands and Flanders, the northern half of Belgium. In South America, Dutch is the official language of Suriname and one of the official languages in the Dutch Caribbean islands Bonaire, Saba and St Eustace, as well as in three independent islands: Aruba, Curacao and the southern half of St Martin (the other half being French). However, virtually all the literature on Dutch as a pluricentric language concentrates on the relationship between the two European varieties, and given the nature of this chapter we will also focus on European Dutch.

The socio-political setting of Dutch in its two jurisdictions in Europe differs considerably. In the Netherlands, where it is the dominant national language, three regional languages have been recognized within

| TABLE 1.1 Address pronouns in standard (northern) and colloquial southern Dutch |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Standard (Northern) Dutch       | Colloquial Southern Dutch       |
| Formal Personal Possessive      | Informal Personal Possessive    |
| Stressed                        | Stressed                        |
| jij (subject)                   | gij (subject)                   |
| jouw                            | ge                              |
| je                              | uw                              |
| jou (object)                    | u                               |
| (object)                        | (various regional forms)        |

Note: The associated verbal agreement rules are briefly as follows: *jullie* agrees with plural verbal morphology, that is, the suffix -en is used on the verb stem; the verb form associated with *u* and *gij/ge* is stem + t, which coincides with the third-person singular verb form; the same holds for *jij/je*, but when subject pronoun and verb are inverted, the verb form is the bare stem (see example (3) for a clear illustration of this).
the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, with Frisian at the highest level of recognition, and Low Saxon and Limburgish at a lower level. In Belgium, Dutch is one of three official languages alongside French and German. Since Belgium has not signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the country has no recognized linguistic minorities.

In 1980 Belgium and the Netherlands formed the Dutch Language Union (*Nederlandse Taalunie* or *Taalunie* for short), a unique international treaty organization with effective linguistic sovereignty over Dutch. With Belgian federalization in 1993, the Flemish Community took over responsibility for the Dutch language in Belgium and Belgium’s seat in the *Taalunie*. In 2004 Suriname acceded to the *Taalunie* as an associate member. Implicitly the *Taalunie* recognizes that Dutch is a pluricentric language, for example, where it defines standard Dutch (Taalunie, 2012; translation by author):

Incidentally, [standard Dutch] is not the same everywhere. You may hear some words or expressions in the Netherlands, but not in Belgium or Suriname. The pronunciation is also different in those three countries.

In codified standard Dutch, differences between north and south are largely limited to pronunciation and vocabulary. Recent phonological studies have shown, for example, significant differences in articulation rate and speech rate (Verhoeven, De Pauw and Kloots, 2004), and differences in the perception of vowels (Kloots, Coussé and Gillis, 2006). On the basis of experimental studies, Van de Velde et al. (2010) argue that there are significant differences between northern and southern pronunciation, but not to the extent that they are different languages or likely to become so. Their main argument for this is that the two varieties share the same phoneme inventory. Nevertheless, the phonological divergence between standard northern and standard southern Dutch in the last half century or more has been well documented (especially since Van de Velde, 1996). Conversely, Geeraerts, Grondelaers and Speelman (1999) observe lexical patterns of convergence between standard northern and standard southern Dutch, although they nuance this in a number of ways. In addition, there are also some morphological and syntactic differences.

The (changing) debate about the relationship between northern and southern Dutch is largely confined to Flanders, where in the 19th century the proponents of Flemish linguistic freedom focused on replacing
French. There was further debate about whether the existing northern standard should be adopted (the ‘integrationist’ stance) or a separate, Flemish standard developed (the ‘particularist’ view; see Willemyns, 2013, pp. 130–2). Eventually, the integrationists prevailed, and for over a century the emphasis in Flanders was on developing Flemish people’s proficiency in standard Dutch. However, there have always been dissenting voices. On the relationship between northern and southern Dutch, Geerts (1992, p. 77) observes that the existence of the term ‘Flemish’ (and the word Vlaams in Dutch) offers an option to distinguish two separate languages, unlike German, for example, which is spoken in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Moreover, as Geerts (1992) also points out, the regular association of the English words Dutch with the Netherlands and Flemish with Flanders, a pattern that also occurs in other languages, contributes to this view internationally.

By the 1990s, the emphasis in the debate had changed to differentiation between the two varieties of Dutch. For some people, the ultimate consequence of this is the development of a separate Flemish language, and Geerts (1992, p. 78) speculates that the majority of Flemish people may not ‘accept a pluralist view of Dutch’. Nevertheless, in his opinion, convergence, especially lexical convergence, is more powerful due to its prevalence among the elite, although it has its limits (for example, the word for ‘jam’ in Flanders is southern konfituur, not northern jam). The Netherlands’ attitude to the differentiation between Dutch and Flemish is, in Geerts’ (1992, pp. 87–8) view, marked by a sense of linguistic supremacy, which the Dutch accept with a certain level of diffidence or indifference. A corollary of this is that the Dutch have little objection to linguistic divergence between north and south, although also within limits.

A quarter of a century later, the intensity and tone of the debate in Flanders about the relationship between Dutch and Flemish has changed considerably. According to Willemyns (2013, p. 238), dialect loss and levelling, relatively recent developments in Flanders, are now widespread. This has resulted in the development of forms of Dutch with ‘a decidedly regional... flavor’ and as a consequence ‘the conventional norm of the standard language appears to be no longer the target in an increasing amount of settings’. It is in this context that we can consider the observation by Van de Velde et al. (2010) of diverging northern and southern pronunciations. It must be noted, however, that the resulting colloquial form of southern Dutch also differs from standard (and northern) Dutch in respect of lexis, syntax and morphology. In the public debate among
the Flemish linguistic elite, this colloquial southern Dutch is known by three names. The most neutral, although by no means value-free, is Tussentaal (literally ‘in-between language’), which portrays colloquial Flemish as operating between the traditional dialects and standard Dutch. The more condescending label Schoon Vlaams (‘beautiful/pretty Flemish’) suggests that it is a sanitized version of Flemish dialect, but the derogatory term that seems to have stuck is Verkavelingsvlaams, an almost untranslatable word coined by Geert Van Istendael, a prominent Flemish journalist and author. Verkaveling is the division of land into (building) plots and by extension Verkavelingsvlaams is, in Van Istendael’s words, the form of Flemish spoken where ‘erstwhile pretty villages have been divided into building plots for superior villas’ (Van Istendael, 1988, p. 15; translation by author).

The question often asked is whether the existence of Tussentaal threatens the cohesion of Dutch. Many linguists, such as Willemyns (2013, p. 252), point to the continuing (socio-political and economic) importance of standard Dutch and a belief in its strength as a pluricentric language. Others, however, question the present model and the continued emphasis on the role of standard Dutch. An interesting take on pluricentricity is Cajot’s (2012, pp. 53–8) characterization of European Dutch as ‘bipolar’ rather than ‘bicentric’. In this view, the divergence between the two varieties of Dutch is bound to continue, not least because the Netherlands remains as convinced of its (linguistic and cultural) superiority and as indifferent to the language debate in Flanders as it has been since the middle of the 19th century.

Address pronouns are one area where colloquial Flemish differs morphologically from standard Dutch (see Table 1.1), but even when the standard language is used, there is some regional variation in their application. Vismans (2007), for example, showed that, in Flanders, job adverts for particular branches of the economy were more likely to contain formal address forms than in the Netherlands. Vismans (2013b), on the other hand, showed no such regional variation for banner adverts on newspaper websites, only variation between certain sectors of the economy. However, the influence of colloquial Flemish often comes through even in more formal settings such as interviews, especially with interactional items like address forms. In interactions between Dutch and Flemish people, the interlocutor from the Netherlands is thus likely to characterize Flemish pronoun use as ‘more polite’, because they interpret u and uw as formal pronouns instead of the oblique and possessive
forms of the colloquial Flemish singular second-person pronoun *gij* that does not distinguish between formal and familiar.

3 Methodology

The data in this chapter are drawn from three in-depth interviews between Dutch journalists and Flemish academics. They are part of a larger collection of 57 interviews (dated between March 2009 and March 2013) from the radio show Casa Luna (http://casaluna.ncrv.nl) which until December 2013 was broadcast daily on Dutch public radio between midnight and 2 a.m. The first hour of the programme always consisted of an interview with someone in the public domain whose work was of current interest, with the second hour taken up by public reaction and discussion. The interviewed guests were therefore usually politicians, academics, high-ranking public servants, charity workers and so on. The programme worked with a bank of interviewers who were also engaged elsewhere as journalists and authors. It was part of the programme’s ethos to keep the atmosphere informal, but given the topicality of the discussions it was not usually possible for interviewer and guest to get to know each other intimately. Most of the interviews were downloaded from iTunes or the programme’s website and initially transcribed as simple text. The programme’s editorial assistant provided general background information by email and during a telephone conversation, and supplied a small number of additional interviews.

It is a characteristic of all 57 interviews in the collection not only that they are in standard Dutch, but also that there is a high frequency of (unstressed) generic address pronoun *je*. In addition, there is initially limited scope for direct address by the guest towards the interviewer because of the unequal relationship between interviewer and interviewee. However, as the interview develops, it has the opportunity to become more of a discussion between two equals and direct address can become more frequent. It is especially at this stage, when the relationship between the two speakers develops, that moves between address forms can take place.

Three of the interviews are with Flemish academics. As part of a seminar on Dutch linguistics, three exchange students from Flanders transcribed these in detail, using a combination of Praat (Boersma, 2015) and Microsoft Word, collected background information on the
interlocutors and helped with a preliminary analysis of the conversations. We then tracked the development of the relationship between the two speakers, paying attention to not only address pronouns but also features such as use of (first) names, markers of (in)formality (for example, through lexical choice), hesitations and the role of humour, as well as regional features in the language used by the speakers. We also took into account speaker characteristics affecting the interaction. The qualitative analysis and discussion in sections 4 and 5 implicitly take some of their inspiration from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA; see, for example, Wodak, 2013, for an overview, or Fairclough, 2010, for a programmatic introduction). CDA is generally regarded more as a research programme than a theoretical framework. It has as its central interest the relationship between language on the one hand, and power and ideology, and their maintenance and reinforcement, on the other. A further characteristic of CDA is ‘self-reflection at every point of one’s research, and distance from the data that are being investigated’ (Wodak, 2013, pp. xliii–xliv).

The basic speaker data are given in Table 1.2 in the order in which the analysis of the interviews is presented in section 4, which also provides further background information.

4 Three Dutch-Flemish interviews

4.1 Colet van der Ven – Kris Vissers

Kris Vissers is an anaesthesiologist and has been Professor of Pain and Palliative Care at the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands since 2005. He trained in Antwerp and Leuven, Belgium. The interview’s main focus is pain management and patients’ perceptions of pain. It opens with the interviewer reading a lyrical description of pain in all its facets from the opening passage of Kluveld (2007), a cultural history
of pain. Next, Van der Ven welcomes her guest, addressing him by his first name – in Dutch, a clear signal of informality closely associated with T pronouns – which is duly followed in her next turn by jij, the stressed T pronoun. However, it is immediately clear that Vissers does not respond to this in a similar vein:

(1) CV: Welkom Kris. 
‘Welcome Kris.’
KV: Goeienavond. 
‘Good evening.’
CV: Deze week is de week van de pijn in het Radboud ziekenhuis waar jij werkt. Een week van de pijn, waarom?
‘This week is the week of pain in the Radboud hospital where you work. A week of pain. Why?’
KV: Vooral om pijn goed zichtbaar te maken. Pijn is een heel nuttig biologisch signaal, daar hebt u net een heel mooie samenvatting van gegeven.
‘Especially to make pain visible. Pain is a useful biological signal, which you have just given a very good summary of.’

Vissers does not actually deviate from u to address Van der Ven throughout the interview. At times he also uses it as a generic pronoun, a function that is usually reserved for (unstressed) je, although he does alternate between generic u and je:

(2) KV: Pijn heeft een nuttig biologisch signaal, zoals ik al zei. 
‘Pain is a useful biological signal, as I already said.’
CV: En dat is?
‘And that is?’
KV: Nou, dat het ook u verhindert van veel te gaan doen.
‘Well, that it also prevents you from doing much.’

[ ... ]
KV: We weten dat hoe vroeger je pijn goed behandelt, hoe minder dat die chronisch kan worden. 
‘We know that the earlier you treat pain right, the less it can become chronic.’

Vissers’ consistent use of the V pronoun contrasts with Van der Ven, who consistently uses T pronouns. However, 20 minutes into the interview she refers to their non-reciprocal pronoun use:

(3) CV: Je hebt het over besturen... Ik zeg steeds ‘je’, en je zegt steeds ‘u’, we hadden afgesproken te tutoyeren, maar de Vlaming in jou is hardnekkig, die blijft ‘u’ zeggen. [lacht]
You talk about managing [pain]...I always say “je” and you always say “u”, we had agreed to say “je”, but the Fleming in you is stubborn, he continues to say “u”. [laughs]

KV: Ik hoor het zelf niet soms.
'I don’t hear it myself sometimes.'

CV: [referring to an interview with a Dutch author who suffers pain and her way of managing it] Wat zegt u – nou ga ik ‘u’ zeggen – wat zeg jij daarvan? [lacht]
'What do you say – now I’m saying “u” – what do you say about that?' [laughs]

Firstly, it is noticeable that Van der Ven mentions a prior agreement between herself and Vissers about the form of address to be used in the interview. A discussion with the programme’s editorial assistant clarified this. She confirmed that, although the programme’s interviewer and guest were not usually able to get to know each other intimately, they always met briefly just before the interview to discuss its form and content. Sometimes such conversations would touch upon address forms, as had obviously been the case here. However, Vissers seems oblivious to what was agreed and Van der Ven interprets this as a cultural characteristic. Secondly, having raised the issue, Van der Ven then briefly slips into formality but corrects herself immediately. Here her (nervous) laugh is an indication that she is slightly uncomfortable with the situation. Vissers’ reaction is a brief acknowledgement, but when something similar occurs about ten minutes later, he hardly reacts:

'You share that? Now I’m becoming Flemish.'

KV: Ja.
'Yes.'

CV: Dat deel je?
'You share that?'

KV: Ja, dat deel ik wel.
'Yes, I do share that.'

To a northerner, then, Vissers’ use of address pronouns gives away his southern origins. Elsewhere, too, Vissers uses markedly regional features. He regularly uses the word *chronisch* (‘chronic’) and thereby illustrates a typical phonological difference between northern and southern Dutch in the pronunciation of many loanwords; for example, those starting with <chr>: /kronis/ in Flanders vs. /χronis/ in the Netherlands. He
also very frequently drops the final consonant of a word – especially *ma* vs. *maar* (‘but’), *da* vs. *dat* (‘that’), *nie* vs. *niet* (‘not’) – and uses a wide range of regional lexical items, including: *toekomen* (vs. *aankomen*, ‘to arrive’), *nochtans* (vs. *toch*, ‘yet’), *tegoei* (vs. *helemaal*, ‘entirely’), *naar voor brengen* (vs. *naar voren brengen*, ‘to bring to the fore’). The addition of *dat* (occasionally *van*) to conjunctions (cf. Vissers’ last turn in example (2)) is another noticeable southern feature of Vissers’ Dutch, as is his word order in verbal clusters. These features are strongest when he is completely engaged in the topic of conversation; for example, when explaining how patients can be trained to use a scale from 1 to 10 to indicate the severity of their pain:

(5) Da’s een heel eenvoudige methode die *mè* een klein beetje training, en misschien een klein beetje informatie voor een operatie, of *voorda* je naar het ziekenhuis komt, kan aangeleerd worden.

‘That’s a very simple method that with a little bit of training, and perhaps a little bit of information before an operation, or before you come to the hospital, can be taught.’

A northern speaker would here say /mɛt/ instead of /mɛ/ (‘with’). Vissers’ pronunciation of the loanword *training* is /trenɪŋ/ vs. northern /trenɪŋ/. The conjunction *voorda* (‘before’) would be pronounced with a final /t/ in northern Dutch, but more likely would simply be *voor*. And in the mouth of a Dutchman, the verbal cluster at the end would be *kan worden aangeleerd* or *aangeleerd kan worden*, but not the one Vissers uses.

4.2 Harm Edens – Rik Torfs

Rik Torfs is a Belgian canon law scholar at the Catholic University of Leuven who has also been a senator, columnist and media personality. Since 2013 he has been the rector of the Catholic University of Leuven. The interview dates from before his election as rector and covers his public profile and academic work, politics and relations, and contrasts between the Netherlands and Belgium/Flanders.

The interview begins and ends seemingly non-reciprocally: Edens welcomes Torfs using the latter’s first name and subsequently uses *je*, but in Torfs’ first greeting we hear *u*:

(6) HE: Mijn gast vanavond is Rik Torfs. Rik Welkom.

‘My guest tonight is Rik Torfs. Rik welcome.’

RT: Dank *u*. Goeienacht.

‘Thank you. Good night.’
HE: Ja het is nacht, inderdaad wel. ... Ik wil als eerste van je weten ...
‘Yes it is night, indeed it is. ... I first want to know from you ...’

This pattern repeats itself when they sign off:

(7) HE: Dankjewel Rik.
‘Thank you very much Rik.’
RT: Dank u.
‘Thank you.’

However, it would be a northern reflex to interpret these minimal exchanges as non-reciprocal. This becomes clear a few minutes into the interview when Torfs addresses Edens directly for the first time by referring to something the latter has said earlier:

(8) ... vrijheid is wel een onderwerp dat mij enorm boeit, hoewel ik op dit ogenblik, zoals je al zei, christendemocratisch-senator ben, heb ik toch met een van mijn boeken de prijs van de denktank Liberales gewonnen, omdat ik eigenlijk toch nogal een voorstander ben van de vrijheid ...
‘... freedom is a subject that interests me enormously, although I am at this moment, as you have already said, a Christian-Democratic senator, I have after all with one of my books won the prize of the think-tank Liberales, because I am actually rather a proponent of freedom ...’

What is more likely the case in (6) and (7) is that Torfs in such everyday formulae as greetings and farewells falls into a Flemish vernacular pattern, where u is the object form of gij. For the next ten minutes of the interview, it is only Edens who addresses his interlocutor directly, always with T forms except for one occasion:

(9) Nou, laten we even ook links gaan kijken. Is het alleen de rechterkant die de vrijheid aan ’t inperken is, of is dat onderbuikgevoel overal zichtbaar, wat u betreft?
‘Well, let’s just also have a look on the left. Is it only the right that is restricting freedom, or is that underbelly feeling visible everywhere, do you think?’

There is nothing to indicate why he does so and he moves back to T in his next address, but a few minutes later they both use u:

(10) HE: En als je de de link legt naar ons CDA? Waar het echt heel heel goed mee gaat op dit moment?
‘And if you make a link to our CDA [the main Christian-Democratic party in the Netherlands]? Which is really faring very well at the moment?’
Despite the serious subject matter of this interview, the tone is clearly light here, to the extent that Edens and Torfs readily exchange banter on a number of occasions, as they do here. The use of the V pronoun, with the function of mock politeness, fits into this. That is not to say that u is strictly necessary in banter, and T also occurs in such exchanges, for example, immediately before they sign off:

(11) HE:  Ik ga nu voor 't eerst heel erg de Belgische politiek volgen.  
   'For the first time now I'm going to follow Belgian politics a great deal.'

RT:  Fantastisch, ik ga jou ook volgen, want jij lijkt me helemaal te vertrouwen.  
   'Fantastic, I'm going to follow you too, because you seem completely trustworthy to me.'

HE:  Dat denk ik ook, en mijn neus groeit een beetje, maar dan inspireer jij misschien daarmee ook de Nederlandse politiek, dat lijkt me prachtig.  
   'I think so too, and my nose is growing a bit, but then you will perhaps inspire Dutch politics with that too, which seems splendid to me.'

In the minutes following example (10), Edens continues to address Torfs directly with u, albeit in a more neutral tone, until he eventually notices, comments on his own use of the V pronoun and continues with T:

(12) Als ik het wat breder mag beschrijver dan zegt u eigenlijk, ik zeg weer 'u', het is zo een serieus gesprek, dan zeg je eigenlijk...  
   'If I may describe it a bit more broadly then you say in fact, I say again “u”; it is such a serious conversation, then you say in fact ..'
we can occasionally observe other southern features in Torfs’ use of standard Dutch, such as the elision of final consonants (for example, *ma* instead of *maar*, ‘but’), lexical choice (for example, *terug* instead of *weer*, ‘again’, *wablief?*, ‘pardon?’, *ik heb ... bij* instead of *ik heb ... bij me*, ‘I’ve got...with me’), and syntactic variation in verb clusters (for example, *daar zou meer moeten over nagedacht worden* instead of *daar zou meer over nagedacht moeten worden*, ‘that should be thought about more’). However, in Torfs’ Dutch these features are much less prominent than in Vissers’.

4.3 Lex Bohlmeijer – Stijn Sieckelinck

Stijn Sieckelinck, an educational researcher and author, studied first in Leuven and then in Amsterdam. At the time of the interview he had lived in the Netherlands since about 2004. The interview discusses the education of young people, their radicalization, and interpretations of freedom in the educational context. It focuses on the cases of three young people who had been in the news in the Netherlands and about whom Sieckelinck had written. The interview maintains an informal tone throughout and the interviewer, Bohlmeijer, addresses his guest exclusively with T pronouns. Sieckelinck, on the other hand, addresses Bohlmeijer directly on only four occasions. One of those is a formulaic ‘thank you’ in the opening section, where, after a brief introduction, he is welcomed to the studio.


‘Rita Kohnstamm [a Dutch psychologist, rv] once wrote “resistance is educational”. But that later actually turned out to be a pronouncement of Freud’s. Was that old man right after all. True probably also for doing an interview. In that respect my guest is warned. He is a philosophical educationalist and his name is Stijn Sieckelinck. A warm welcome.’

SS: Dank je wel.

‘Thank you.’

When signing off, there are two further formulaic ‘thank yous’, one of which a barely audible *dank u*. 

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We have already talked about such formulae in relation to the interview with Rik Torfs. Of the other two direct address forms, one occurs about halfway through the interview in a lively discussion about education and freedom in which the speakers’ turns regularly overlap. At one stage Bohlmeijer apparently raises his finger by way of interruption, because Sieckelinck says:

(15) SS: Ik zie je je vinger opsteken en dat betekent ...  
‘I can see you you raise your finger and that means ...’

The fourth direct address occurs just after the break in the programme. For these breaks the programme’s guests are invited to suggest some music and Sieckelinck’s suggestion had been David Bowie’s performance of Simon and Garfunkel’s song ‘America’ for the Concert for New York in October 2001.

(16) SS: ...het heeft wel wat hits op YouTube, maar voor zover ik weet is er geen echte opname van en daarom ben ik heel blij dat uw redactie het ook heeft kunnen opsnorren ...  
‘... it does have some hits on YouTube, but as far as I know there is no real recording of it and therefore I am very glad that your producers have been able to dig it out ...’

A tally of four direct addresses, two with je and two with u, two formulae and two in non-formulaic interactions, provides little evidence of how address is handled in this Dutch-Flemish interaction. Unlike in the other two conversations, where the interviewers remark on their own switches to V, there is no metalinguistic commentary on address forms. Those commentaries can be seen as indications of confusion on the part of the (northern) interviewers and one of them links it explicitly with her guest’s southernness. That guest also had a number of other prominent southern linguistic features. However, although to a northerner Sieckelinck’s pronunciation sounds slightly southern, there are few other markedly southern features in his Dutch (apart from occasionally
the word order in verbal clusters and the odd word). More noticeable in Sieckelinck’s Dutch is the regular occurrence of typically northern features, especially lexical items such as meid (vs. meisje, ‘girl’) or gaaf (vs. mooi, ‘great’), and expressions like das best wel heftig (‘that’s really quite difficult’). A sophisticated southern listener even noticed slight northern phonological traits (Rik Vosters, personal communication, 19 July 2014). It is not surprising, therefore, that of the three interviews discussed, this one comes across as the one where linguistically interviewer and guest are most in tune with each other.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the use of address forms and their interpretation in conversations between Dutch and Flemish people. Because of variation in the address system in these two parts of the pluricentric Dutch language area, the underlying assumption was that there would be differences in use between speakers from the two areas and that in pluricentric conversations this could be a source of confusion. Our investigation was based on three long interviews between Dutch journalists and Flemish guests in live broadcasts on Dutch (not Flemish) radio, a situation in which standard Dutch is used. This is, of course, a small sample, but the length of the selected interviews (40–45 minutes each) allowed the two speakers to develop and occasionally comment on their relationship. In the last interview we analysed, the interviewer used T pronouns throughout but the guest used very few direct address forms. On the four occasions that he did use them, they were distributed evenly between T and V, and between formulaic and non-formulaic utterances. In the second interview, guest and interviewer consistently addressed each other with T, except for an occasion when they exchanged banter and another occasion when the interviewer slipped into V. When realizing this, he blamed the gravity of the discussion and switched back to T. In the first interview we discussed, the guest consistently used V and the interviewer T, except for two occasions when the interviewer slipped into V, realized that she had done so and switched back to T, commenting on her guest’s use of V as a token of his Flemishness.

It is important to realize that due to the setting (a northern radio studio and a conversation in which the northern interviewer ultimately controls the conversation) the Flemish guest in these conversations is ‘the
other. Their language is different not only to that of the interviewer but also the audience, and that difference is noticeable because they sound different, and they use different words and structures. In that respect it is relevant that Sieckelinck sounds the least Flemish of the three guests and Vissers the most. This is not to say that Sieckelinck’s Flemishness is not noticeable. Indeed, at the start of the interview, immediately after welcoming Sieckelinck (see example (13)), Bohlmeijer comments on it very explicitly:

\[(17) \text{LB: Ben jij goed opgevoed? Vlaming.} \]
\[\text{‘Have you been well educated? Fleming.’} \]
\[\text{SS: Ik ben degelijk opgevoed. Ja zeker.} \]
\[\text{‘I have been soundly educated. Yes certainly.’} \]

At the time of their interviews Sieckelinck and Vissers had both been living in the Netherlands for a considerable time: Vissers for six years and Sieckelinck for eight. The two years’ difference is unlikely to be an explanation for their linguistic differences, but their 17-year age difference may be. Another explanation may be the gender of their interlocutor: Vissers is interviewed by a woman, Sieckelinck by a man. The topics discussed in the interview with Torfs also regularly allow Edens to highlight Torfs’ Flemishness. We can conclude from this that the setting and the interviewer-guest dynamic lead to a situation in which the northerner comments on the southerner’s linguistic behaviour, but not vice versa, whereas a discussion with the reverse dynamic is more likely to produce comments by southerners on northerners’ linguistic behaviour. In that context it is also necessary to highlight the potential for researcher bias in a project on these issues carried out by a northern (albeit expatriate) researcher.

Two relevant observations arise from this research in relation to forms of address. Firstly, it is noteworthy that when interviewers comment on their guest’s linguistic behaviour, this is specifically about their use of forms of address, but not about other linguistic issues. This highlights the centrality of address in the management of interactions between speakers. Secondly, it needs to be stressed that confusion about address forms is not limited to pluricentric interactions, because at least one conversation between northerners (a female interviewer and a male guest) in the collection discussed in section 3 has the interviewer moving between T and V in the face of her guest’s apparent unwillingness to address her with T. Moreover, the strategic deployment of forms of address is an important component in the inventory of chat show hosts; for example,
when moving from a light-hearted (T address) to a more serious (V address) topic (see Vismans, 2013c).

The literature on Dutch as a pluricentric language, briefly discussed in section 2, regularly returns to the question of whether standard northern and standard southern Dutch are converging or diverging. There is general agreement on phonological divergence but less so on lexical developments. The present chapter does not provide the diachronic angle necessary to determine the extent to which the two European varieties of standard Dutch are moving towards or away from a common system of address. However, it has demonstrated that educated speakers of Dutch in Flanders and the Netherlands can differ subtly in the way they use the address forms of standard Dutch and in the way they interpret each other’s forms of address.

Notes

1 I am very grateful for the constructive comments provided by two anonymous reviewers that have improved the quality of this chapter. I would also like to thank Rik Vosters and Suzie Holdsworth for their helpful comments.

2 For recent work on southern address pronouns and comparisons between northern and southern usage, see, for example, Vandekerckhove (2004, 2005); Vismans (2007, 2013b); Plevoets, Speelman and Geeraerts (2008); see also section 2 of this chapter.

3 They were Deborah D’Hauwer, Kari Feys and Stijn Schuytser from the University of Leuven’s Brussels campus.

4 Transcriptions have been kept simple, so pauses, hesitations and repetitions have not been marked. Instances of address pronouns appear in bold. Translations render the sense of the examples, rather than providing glosses.

5 Laura Dekker, a teenager who wanted to sail solo around the world; Tanja Nijmeijer, who had joined the FARC rebels in Colombia; and Natascha Kampusch, who had been held captive for a number of years by a psychopath in Austria.

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2

Communities of Addressing Practice? Address in Internet Forums Based in German-Speaking Countries

Heinz L. Kretzenbacher and Doris Schüpbach

Abstract: This case study on address in computer-mediated communication (CMC) analyzes the forms of address in a corpus of readers’ forums in online editions of German, Austrian and German-Swiss newspapers. More formal Sie (V) pronominal and nominal address forms are the dominant and sometimes only address forms found in the forums, contrary to frequent assumptions. Addressing behaviour in the forums shows significant differences between the three countries, but above all each individual forum displays characteristic patterns of address, supporting the view that forum participants form communities of linguistic practice.

Key words: German; computer-mediated communication; pluricentric language; address forms

1 Introduction

The system of address forms in German is both complex and socially highly relevant. In addition, there are differences between the national varieties of German in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. This chapter explores address practices in computer-mediated communication (CMC) in German through an analysis of forms of address in a corpus of readers’ forums in online editions of German, Austrian and Swiss newspapers. It focuses on two main questions. Firstly, is address choice constitutive in the formation of specific communities of practice in CMC, and if so, how? Secondly, if there are trends with regard to different address practices in Internet forums based in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, do such differences reflect national varieties of German or are they specific to individual forums?

2 Address in German

Pronominal address in German consists of the more formal V pronoun Sie (singular and plural, grammatically third-person plural) and the more informal T pronouns du (second-person singular) for one interlocutor and ihr (second-person plural) for multiple interlocutors (see Table 2.1). As we will discuss later, there is a tendency for the plural address pronoun ihr to change from a clear T pronoun to one that can also be used for a group of people with whom the speaker is on V terms individually.

In terms of nominal address, first name is generally associated with more informal address and mostly combined with the informal address pronoun. Formal nominal address – conventionally most often combined with Sie – generally consists of the honorific Herr/Frau plus last name, though adding a title is also possible (Frau Professor Huber). However, the various possibilities and options available to a speaker turn ‘the seemingly simple binary opposition between a T pronoun and a V pronoun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Address pronouns in German</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal (T)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Formal (V)</td>
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into a potentially complex system that is a very supple instrument for the
social positioning of interlocutors’ (Kretzenbacher, 2011a, p. 71).

German is a pluricentric language with different national standards
in the three main German-speaking countries: Germany, Austria and
Switzerland. The differences between the national standards of German,
as well as remnants of specific macro-regional differences in Eastern
Germany, the area of the former German Democratic Republic, also
extend to pragmatic phenomena such as address. The empirical data
collected in the first Melbourne Address Project in the early 2000s docu-
mented significant differences between address practices in Germany
and in Austria, above all in the workplace domain. While less T address
is used in Eastern Germany compared to Western Germany, much more
T is present in Austria than in Germany, also combined with higher
frequency of title use in Austria (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009;
Kretzenbacher, 2011a). There is very little empirical research on address
in Swiss German, although Schüpbach (2015) shows in her overview
that the existing evidence points to a tendency of less title use and
much lower levels of formality in address in Swiss German compared to
German German, particularly in the workplace. Elter (2009), compar-
ing German, Austrian and Swiss address and greeting practices, reaches
similar conclusions.

3 Address in CMC

3.1 Research on address in CMC

Oliveira (2013, p. 305) states that there are few studies on address in
CMC. This might be due to the fact that the overwhelming majority
of linguistic studies on CMC deal with English, a language without a
pronominal T/V distinction, in which the pragmatic role of address is
reduced to nominal address, in particular to vocatives, which are much
less frequent than pronominal address forms.

Werry (1996, pp. 52–3) uses the term addressivity, much quoted in
linguistic CMC research, specifically for the use of individual inter-
locutors’ names in a vocative function at the beginning of each utterance
within the rather chaotic multi-interlocutor framework of early Internet
Relay Chat. Even in more recent and more structured forms of multi-
interlocutor CMC, including in forms that do not evolve in real time (fo
example, online forums or mailing lists), addressivity is a major feature (see Kitade, 2013, p. 2), albeit not in Werry’s narrow sense – nor in the wide sense of Bakhtin (1986, pp. 95–9), for whom addressivity simply denotes the essential feature of every utterance that it is directed to someone.

In this study, addressivity refers to the presence of an identifiable addressee of a CMC post, an individual or a group explicitly addressed by linguistic means. Given the importance of clearly determining the addressee(s) of particular turns in multi-interlocutor CMC, addressivity is one of its salient features. The addressivity of a CMC post thus encompasses not only address pronouns and verb forms but also vocatives – in particular, designatory vocatives in the form of the addressee’s posting name, often preceded by an @ (see Anglemark, 2006, p. 299). In addition to vocatives, addressivity also includes indirect address by pseudo-referentiality, where the context indicates that the person seemingly referred to is actually addressed – for example, in a sarcastic way as in example (8). In this form, nouns are syntactically embedded (as opposed to vocatives). A post in an online forum is addressive if it signals the presence of any specific addressee(s) among the other posters (or the community of posters as a whole) by any linguistic means.

Many forms of CMC, such as message boards and online forums, constitute somewhat transient, but still identifiable communities of practice – that is, ‘collection[s] of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor’ in the definition of Eckert (2006, p. 683) – with a core of frequent participants, whose identity in the specific forum is constructed by linguistic means (see Stommel, 2008; Arendholz, 2013). Forums often have specific ways of identifying participants such as avatars, nicknames or the participants’ actual names. As part of their implicit rules or explicit code of conduct (netiquette), some forums also develop specific types of addressivity which have to be learned by newcomers (see Androutsopoulos, 2003, p. 188; Kretzenbacher, 2011b; Arendholz, 2013). Thus, addressivity in multi-interlocutor CMC is an important factor in defining online communities of practice.

3.2 Address in German CMC

As is the case for research on address in CMC in general, there is little research on address in German-language CMC. While address in German is generally characterized by a high embarrassment potential
(Kretzenbacher, Clyne and Schüpbach, 2006), it puts participants in German-speaking CMC in a specific double-bind situation. Among adult German speakers who are neither related nor good friends, V is conventionally and still overwhelmingly the unmarked form of address in offline interactions. However, the convention on the German-language Internet, at least in its early days until the mid-1990s, was T as the unmarked address. This convention was developing when Internet users were a small minority and a real sense of a Web-based ‘nerd’ community existed (see Kretzenbacher, 2011c, p. 879). It therefore was, and in some cases still is, understood as an indication of affinity between interlocutors based on what Clyne, Norrby and Warren (2009, pp. 69–70) call ‘perceived commonalities’.

Since the Internet has become ubiquitous, the majority of its users no longer perceive such commonalities as existing. Nevertheless, an awareness of the old unmarked T in German CMC persists: statements that the T address with du is the ‘normal’ or ‘default’ address on the German-language Internet are still circulated and thus perpetuated, such as this one: ‘in der multimedialen Welt duzt man nunmal’ (‘using du [=T] address is just what you do in the multimedia world’) (quoted in Wittmann, 2015).

This perception, however, is not corroborated by the evidence. In large areas of the German-language Internet – for example, on commercial websites in traditionally more conservative sectors such as finance, law or upmarket retail – T address would be highly unusual. For instance, none of the websites of car manufacturer BMW, the German railways, Deutsche Bank, insurance company Allianz or upmarket department store KaDeWe use T forms to address customers. As for public service communication: in December 2014, the minister responsible for police in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) decreed that NRW police exclusively use V when communicating with the public on the Internet, except when specifically addressing children or adolescents (Welt, 2015). While mainly concerned with ‘social networks’, most communication and media consultants recommend choosing the address form in line with the profile and culture of the company, not based on the communication channel and its perceived address norms (see Hintz, 2013). Nevertheless, it took until the early 2010s, for example, before IKEA addressed its customers with T consistently across its three German-language domains (see Norrby and Hajek, 2011, who describe the earlier inconsistent use of T).
An additional complication arises from the fact that in German, the transition from mutual V address to mutual T is normally made explicit by some metapragmatic discourse, such as *Sollen wir uns nicht duzen?* (‘Why don’t we address each other with *du*?’). This transition is generally irreversible, so that a change back from T to V is usually considered an insult, as is non-negotiated and non-reciprocal use of T. Thus switching between T and V address with the same interlocutor is not normally possible, neither in online communication (for example, within a single exchange or on different interactive websites) nor offline.

4 Newspaper forums: a case study

As a case study, we compare readers’ forums in the online platforms of national newspapers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Unlike forums for narrow special-interest groups (philatelists or young parents, for example), such newspaper forums are in principle openly accessible for commenting, although registration is generally required as a prerequisite. This distinguishes the smaller group of forum contributors from the much wider group of forum readers. Similar to other CMC communities (see Androutsopoulos, 2003), online newspaper forums are characterized by a core group of more active participants (i.e., frequent posters) and a periphery of less active posters and mere readers and by a common inventory of linguistic behaviour specific to the respective forum. In these respects, online communities in newspaper forums form communities of practice in Eckert’s (2006) sense.

Although there is no way of confirming that the individual contributors to a newspaper forum are actually located in the country of publication of the newspaper, it appears that this is overwhelmingly the case. Most of the contributors comment on articles of national or even regional interest as well as on articles of international issues, and if contributors are posting from abroad, they often mention this in their comments.

In order to obtain comparable sets of readers’ comments from newspapers based in the three countries, we selected the following online editions: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) for Germany; *Der Standard* and *Der Kurier* for Austria; and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) and *Tages-Anzeiger* for Switzerland. All six newspapers have a national distribution and are of a broadsheet character (although the Austrian *Der Kurier* has some characteristics of a tabloid).
Their readership is generally well educated and middle class; the political stance of SZ, Der Standard and Tages-Anzeiger is considered as centre-left; that of FAZ, Der Kurier and NZZ as centre-right. As a next step, we chose a news item which was reported in all papers and generated contributions by and discussion among readers; namely, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released on 13 April 2014 (the individual articles are listed at the end of this chapter). We collected the posts to the respective articles and coded them according to the address terms used. Checks of other discussions in the selected newspapers suggested that our results reflected the typical address patterns of these forums. The quantitative results are summarized in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. Table 2.2 presents the numbers of comments and the presence (or absence) of addressivity in broad categories, whereas Table 2.3 lists addressivity by detailed category.

The most salient observation is that, in all forums, addressive contributions are in the minority. This is most likely due to the character of newspaper forums where the participants’ first priority is to post their comment on the issues at hand; commenting on other participants’ contributions, initiating a discussion or starting an argument take second place. The two Austrian newspapers Der Standard and Der Kurier show the scope of both the number of comments and the variation in types of addressivity. Der Standard shows the highest comment activity and the third-highest percentage of contributions with addressivity, while Der Kurier has by far the fewest comments, and only one example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>N posts</th>
<th>No addressivity</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tages-Anzeiger</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>82 (74.5%)</td>
<td>28 (25.5%)</td>
<td>28 (25.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZZ</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43 (63.2%)</td>
<td>25 (36.8%)</td>
<td>25 (36.8%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland total</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>125 (70.2%)</td>
<td>53 (29.8%)</td>
<td>53 (29.8%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurier</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7 (87.5%)</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>219 (64.2%)</td>
<td>122 (35.8%)</td>
<td>88 (25.8%)</td>
<td>34 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria total</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>226 (64.8%)</td>
<td>123 (35.2%)</td>
<td>88 (25.2%)</td>
<td>35 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAZ</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>110 (57.3%)</td>
<td>82 (42.7%)</td>
<td>76 (39.6%)</td>
<td>6 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39 (86.7%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany total</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>149 (62.8%)</td>
<td>88 (37.2%)</td>
<td>81 (34.2%)</td>
<td>7 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>500 (64.4%)</td>
<td>264 (34.6%)</td>
<td>222 (29.1%)</td>
<td>42 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of addressivity. At the same time, readers’ comments in Der Standard show the greatest variety in addressivity: it is only in the Der Standard forum that every category is represented (see Table 2.3).

Due to the small numbers in most categories of addressivity, the significance of differences between newspapers and countries can only be determined if we compare all V addressivity (pronominal as well as vocative) on the one hand, and all other forms of addressivity on the other. A Chi square test indicates that at the level of individual newspapers the differences between V address frequencies in newspapers are highly significant (p < .001); at the country level, the differences in the distribution of V address, other addressivity and posts without explicit addressivity are all highly significant (p < .001). However, this significance is restricted to our corpus. Not all readers’ forums in the online versions of German-speaking Swiss newspapers, for example, show V-only address. Härvelid (2007, p. 38) found exclusively T singular in a forum of the free daily 20 Minuten and both V and T address in a forum of the weekly Weltwoche.

If explicit address is present, pronominal V address is the most common form (198 posts, 26 per cent of all posts). The following

### Table 2.3 Frequency of address forms used in German-language online newspaper forums (percentage of total posts per newspaper/country)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>(V)</th>
<th>T sg</th>
<th>T pl</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tages-Anzeiger</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZZ</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switz. Total</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurier</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria total</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAZ</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SZ</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany total</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
- V: V address (usually pronoun Sie)
- (V): implied V address (using honorific and last name in vocative function)
- T sg: T address singular (2sg)
- T pl: T address plural (2pl)
- Indir: 3sg reference in direct reply (pseudo-referentiality)
- Mixed: T and V within the same post
example illustrates this use (the relevant address term is highlighted in all examples):

(1) Also – nehmen wir an, dass das, was Sie schreiben, richtig ist...
   ‘OK – let’s assume that what you write is correct ...’ (‘Max Seelhofer’
   in reply to ‘Benedikt Jorns’ in NZZ)

This is followed by implied V address (24 posts, 3 per cent), where the use of the honorific Herr or Frau plus last name in vocative function implies the use of V, even though no pronoun of address is present:

(2) Nur doof, dass Uran keine erneuerbare und klimafreundliche Ressource ist, Herr Meier
   ‘What a shame that uranium isn’t a renewable and climate-friendly resource, Mr Meier’ (‘Frank Miller’ in reply to ‘Meier James’ in Tages-Anzeiger)

While the vocative in example (2) emphasizes the sarcastic addressivity of this particular post, it makes it only slightly more formal than the use of the V pronoun on its own. Implied V address is found in four of the six newspaper forums, predominantly in Tages-Anzeiger and FAZ. Formal address with honorific Herr plus last name can be used in sarcastic function, in particular if the context would suggest a less formal form of address (see Norrick and Bubel, 2009). In forums such as Tages-Anzeiger and FAZ, however, this type of formal address is so frequent and thus apparently part of the normal addressing practice in the respective communities that its sarcastic use must be made obvious by additional sarcasm markers (such as the colloquial nur doof in example (2)).

T address, on the other hand – be it singular or plural – does not occur at all in any of the Swiss forums and is rare in German ones. In contrast, the Austrian Der Standard has 23 instances of singular and plural T. T singular address is used in 19 posts in our corpus, with all but one in Der Standard:

(3) Ja, bitte fasse es zusammen und schreibe bei deiner Zusammenfassung
die wissenschaftliche Quelle dazu
   ‘Yes, please summarize and add the scholarly reference to your summary’ (‘Searles’ in reply to ‘ee89c99f-41b-416d-81d1’ in Der Standard, 15 April 2014, 10:52)

T plural address appears in nine posts, predominantly in Der Standard (see example (5)) and in FAZ:

DOI: 10.1057/9781137529923.0008
(4) Da mir sowieso keiner glaubt, empfehle ich diverse Seiten, die ihr bei der Googelsuche [sic]... erhaltet zu sichten

'Since no-one is believing me anyway, I recommend to check some sites that you.tpl will get through a Google search' (Jürgen Blim/'Jubli' in FAZ, 14 April 2014, 19:26)

In all three national standard varieties of German, the default use of T plural address is with a group of interlocutors who the speaker would address individually with T singular; otherwise V plural Sie is used. However, nowadays T plural address is also acceptable with a group some or even all of whom the speaker would address individually with V singular (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 46–7; for CMC, see Bendel, 2008), although this can still lead to misunderstandings, as we will see in examples (13) and (14). This T plural address is particularly used to address a group in a slightly less formal way, as in example (4), in keeping with a recent tendency to intermediary forms of address and greetings in German that mitigate the strict T/V opposition (see Linke, 2000).

In our corpus, particularly in Der Standard, T singular and plural are also used to broadcast truisms or general advice as in the following two examples of imperatives:

(5) Geniesst die Feier solang die Musik noch spielt.

‘Enjoy.tpl the party while the band still plays’ (‘S=klogW’ in Der Standard, 14 April 2014, 10:25)

(6) Diskutiere niemals mit Idioten...

‘Never discuss.tsg with idiots ...’ (‘Der Markt will es!’ in Der Standard, 13 April 2014, 19:00)

Example (6) also points to another function of T singular in this context: disagreement involving rudeness or sarcasm is often, though not exclusively, expressed by a change to T singular. This is the case in example (7). In his previous post ‘RichardRoe’ used V, but here he switches to T singular. This is followed by T plural in the postscript to comment on the prevalent tone of the forum, thus addressing the entire community.

(7) Es ist kein Argument, es ist eine Feststellung. Es geht da nur um die CO₂-Konzentration und um sonst nix. Falls man Dich entmündigen sollte, weil Du nicht sinnerfassend lesen kannst, dann kann ich Dir auch nicht helfen...vielleicht ne Spende an eine Institution, die sich um Früh-Demente kümmert? PS: Ihr habt nen saumässigen Umgangston da, da muss man sich wohl anpassen...

DOI: 10.1057/9781137529923.0008
‘It’s no argument, it’s a statement. We’re only talking about the concentration of CO₂, nothing else. If you.tsg should be placed under guardianship because you.tsg can’t read properly, then I can’t help you.tsg ... maybe a donation to an institution caring for early dementia sufferers? P.S. You.tpl have a horrible tone here, I suppose one has to adapt to ...’ (‘RichardRoe’ in reply to ‘Searles’ in Der Standard, 13 April 2014, 21:53)³

Indirect address, mostly using third-person singular reference in a direct reply, occurs in a total of 13 posts – ten in Der Standard and three in FAZ:

(8) Jetzt wird klar woher Herr Esser seine Überzeugung hat. Dann kann er sicher gut erklären...

‘Now it becomes clear where Mr Esser gets his belief from. So he’ll certainly be able to explain ...’ (Jürgen Blim/’Jubli’ in reply to Maximilian Esser/’Everhardi’ in FAZ, 16 April 2014, 7:48)

The distancing effect of the third-person singular pseudo-reference form in an addressive function not only intensifies the sarcastic tone of this posting, it also reinforces the notion of multi-addressivity of postings in a forum such as this – the addressee is not only the author of the preceding posting but all readers of the forum.

The mixed use of T and V within the same post only occurs once in our corpus:

(9) ... dabei sagen sie ja selbst...klimaveränderungen, die normalerweise jahrmillonen dauern passieren plötzlich in 100 jahren ich hoff du hast enkerl...und ich hoff sie wissen was du hier schreibst...wenn du falsch liegst werden die dich verfluchen...

‘... well you.v are saying it yourself...climate change that normally takes millions of years suddenly happens within 100 years I hope you. tsg have grandkids...and I hope they know what you.tsg are writing here...if you.tsg are wrong they will curse you.tsg ...’ (‘chezgarando’ in reply to ‘wrdl brnft’ in Der Standard, 14 April 2014, 06:29)

A switch from V to T within the same utterance is unusual, but might be explained by the poster being emotionally upset. Example (9) is part of a heated exchange, in which ‘chezgarando’ generally uses T in the argument with ‘wrdl brnft’; the V address in example (9) is the only time ‘chezgarando’ uses this form within this forum.

Other active posters in Der Standard also show variability in address. Some seem to display a personal preference: of the 30 posts by user ‘1000undeine8’, 13 contain no address and the remaining 17 use explicit (15) or implied (2) V address; even in quite aggressive arguments
‘1000undeine8’ does not use T at all. ‘Searles’, on the other hand, never uses V address. Of the 17 individual turns by this contributor, eight are free of addressivity, three use T address and six use indirect address, mostly third-person singular reference in the function of address. However, there is also one example of pronoun avoidance in direct reply to a claim made in the previous post:

(10) Bitte um einen Link, der postuliert, dass durch den Klimawandel die Welt untergeht.

‘Could I ask [no object pronoun] for a link claiming that the world will perish because of climate change?’ (‘Searles’ in reply to ‘Peter_23’ in Der Standard, 13 April 2014, 20:01)

In the case of address variability shown by other contributors, such as ‘chezgarando’ (total of 10 posts in the corpus), ‘RichardRoe’ (8 posts) or ‘wrdl bmft’ (5 posts), it could be argued that the context and the tone of the discussion rather than personal preference influence their address choice, as is made explicit by ‘RichardRoe’ in example (7). It is part of a longer thread of heated conversation initiated by ‘RichardRoe’, in which he first uses V, then switches to T singular in a reply to a rather aggressive post from ‘Searles’ and finally indicates the reason for this address and his equally harsh reaction metalinguistically, accusing the community of using a bad tone in the conversation. Later in the same thread, ‘RichardRoe’ addresses the slightly less aggressive contributor ‘1000undeine8’ with T singular but accommodates to their V address in the following turns. However, not all participants accommodate to address forms used by preceding posts. In one instance in Der Standard, a post using T plural (example (5)) initiates a lengthy thread of 14 posts from ten different contributors, with a clear prevalence of T singular address and one contribution using V.

Generally, our survey confirms that V address in German-language newspaper forums is not as unusual as forum participants often seem to think (see Kretzenbacher, 2011b, pp. 228–9). The following comment from Der Standard (but not part of this chapter’s dataset) reflects the attitude and perception of many users:

‘The Standard forum is an exception on the Internet. Sie [V address] is used consistently here, a fact that quite agrees with me, since I would usually use Sie in this kind of discussion with the respective people in real life (apart from friends, whom I don’t recognize from their [forum] nicknames).’ (‘Dazu folgendes:’ in Der Standard, 4 July 2013 16:09)⁵

In fact, none of the netiquettes and guidelines for postings of the newspapers in question mention address at all. However, they use V to address the potential contributors; for example, ‘Wir schätzen es, dass Sie auf Tagesanzeiger.ch/Newsnet mitdiskutieren möchten. Ihre Meinung zählt.’ (‘We appreciate that you [V] would like to contribute to the discussion on Tagesanzeiger.ch/Newsnet. Your [V] opinion counts’).⁶

V address in online newspaper forums is also not specific to one national variety of German, as some posters in Der Standard assume:

(12) Aus deutschen Foren bin ich das ‘du’ gewöhnt. Es bringt irgendwie so ein Gefühl der Zusammenghörigkeit und dass wir auf einer Ebene sind. Natürlich stört dies hier in Ö die hohe Gesellschaft, weil sie ja was besseres ist.

‘I am accustomed to “you” [T address] from German forums. It brings some sort of a feeling of community with it somehow and that we are all on the same level. Of course, here in A[ustria] this annoys the upper echelons of society, since they are something better.’ (‘TheMassEffec7’ in Der Standard, 27 February 2014, 13:47)⁷

It is interesting that this contributor links T address with a sense of community and commonality – reminiscent of Clyne, Norrby and Warren’s (2009, pp. 69–70) ‘perceived commonalities’, mentioned in section 3.2 – and a less hierarchical society in Germany as opposed to Austria. In light of this, it is somewhat ironic that among the forums in our corpus, it is precisely the Austrian Der Standard which has the overwhelming majority of T singular address.

Overall and despite the varying number of posts and the differences in character of the forums, some tendencies are apparent. The majority of posts in all newspaper forums do not contain any explicit address. Der Kurier (Austria) contains the lowest proportion of posts with addres- sivity (12.5 per cent), the FAZ (Germany) the highest (43 per cent). When direct address is used, the German FAZ and Der Standard (Austria) show more variety than the other forums with four and six types of address, respectively. Except in Der Kurier (Austria), V (and (V)) address is most
common in all forums, ranging between 72 per cent (Der Standard, Austria) and 100 per cent (Tages-Anzeiger and NZZ, both Switzerland) of all addressive posts. If we summarize the results by country, V is the only direct form of address used in the Swiss forums, the German forums clearly favour V, and the Austrian forum of Der Standard presents a quite varied picture, as opposed to the one of Der Kurier (also Austria), which only has one explicit address form (T plural). However, these tendencies are not directly correlated to offline address behaviour patterns in the three countries (see section 2), although the mistaken perception by Austrian forum participants – that Der Standard is unique in using V address (see example (11)) – might reflect expectations from offline communication in Austria rather than from communication in German-language Internet forums outside Austria.

The address patterns appear to be influenced much more by other factors, among them how strictly forums are moderated and which naming practices are prevalent. Not only are insulting posts (which are more likely to contain T address used not to signal intimacy but contempt, as in the case of the argument between ‘RichardRoe’ and ‘Searles’ – see example (7)) targeted for deletion by moderators, the naming conventions of the participants might also trigger different address behaviours. In Der Standard, most participants use nicknames, whereas contributors to both Swiss forums identify themselves by their real (or ‘real-sounding’) names. Pseudonyms and nicknames are officially banned by FAZ and Tages-Anzeiger but allowed by Süddeutsche Zeitung, Der Standard (unless they are used to claim a false identity), and recently allowed but discouraged by NZZ. While usernames have only recently come into the focus of CMC research (see Hassa, 2012; Kelley, 2012), it stands to reason that the use of real names would have a strong disciplinary impact on posting behaviour; this may include the triggering of the more formal V address, simply by making forum contributors identifiable.

Another feature is specific to the Swiss forums: the posts have to be written in Swiss Standard German, and posts in Swiss German dialects are not allowed – this guideline is strictly enforced by the moderators (Machac, 2013). Unlike Austrian German and most varieties of German German, Swiss German has practically no functional grey area between local dialects and national standard, but a clear functional and domain-specific diglossic separation (see Siebenhaar and Wyler, 1997; Petkova, 2012). Thus, the Swiss Standard German variety (Dürscheid
and Businger, 2006) required in the Swiss newspaper forums may favour unmarked V address, seen as appropriate to the Swiss Standard German used in formal and official situations.

As Kretzenbacher (2011b, pp. 233–9) described for German-language Internet forums other than newspaper forums, metapragmatic address discussion among participants is found as part of escalating arguments between participants. This is also the case in newspaper forums. In a conflict, one participant might resent being addressed with T by the opponent in the argument, interpreting this address as an insult or as too intimate between strangers (as it would be offline); or, quite to the contrary, another participant might resent being addressed with V by their opponent, interpreting it as an offensive withdrawal of the communal mutual T that is expected by some users of German-language Internet sites.

There is one example of such metapragmatic address discussion in our corpus:

(13) Fällt euch was auf? Seit Jahren hält man uns in einer Stimmung des Alarmismus.... Fragt ihr euch nicht auch langsam: Wer eigentlich will da was genau bezwecken?

‘Do you.tpl notice anything? For years, we have been kept in a mood of alarmism.... Don’t you.tpl start asking yourselves: Who exactly is aiming for what specifically [with this]?’ (Vera Schmidt/’V-Schmidt’ in FAZ, 13 April 2014, 19:58)

In direct reply to this post, ‘Korelis’ rejects the claim by ‘V-Schmidt’, and then links his judgement to the use of T plural address by ‘V-Schmidt’, exaggerating its allegedly conspiratory intimacy by falsely claiming to have been personally addressed with T singular:

(14) Doch doch Frau Schmidt, die Frage wer wirtschaftliche Interessen hat, den messbaren Klimawandel als Verschwörungstheorie abzutun, drängt sich geradezu auf, ganz besonders, wenn Sie mich in Ihrem Kommentar so jovial Duzen [sic].

‘Oh yes, Ms Schmidt, the question in whose economic interest it is to dismiss measurable climate change as a conspiracy theory is practically unavoidable, particularly if you.v use du to address me in such a jovial way in your.v comment.’ (Paul Korelis/’Korelis’ in FAZ, 13 April 2014, 21:31)

‘V-Schmidt’ starts her reply with a V-like vocative, mirroring the usage made by ‘Korelis’, but then discusses his rejection of her claim without
any addressivity. It is only in the last sentence of her reply that she directly addresses the other poster again:

(15) Ja, Herr Korelis.... Und bitte vielmals um Entschuldigung, dass ich das für Sie falsche Personalpronomen verwendet hab, war nicht persönlich gemeint

‘Well, Mr Korelis.... And my sincerest apologies for using the personal pronoun that was the wrong one for you. No personal offence intended with that.’ (Vera Schmidt/’V-Schmidt’ in FAZ, 14 April 2014, 12:55)

5 Conclusion

Our case study confirms that T can certainly not be considered the exclusive or even primary address form on the German-language Internet (see also Kretzenbacher, 2011b). On the contrary, V is used much more frequently than T in the online newspaper forums we analysed. While the real-life convention of unmarked V and the Internet tradition of unmarked T can clash, it seems that the offline convention has taken the upper hand in these forums. We have identified some variation in address practices in the selected newspaper forums in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. While the majority of posts in all forums do not contain any explicit address, addressive posts were found in all six forums analysed, ranging from 12.5 per cent of all posts in Der Kurier (Austria) to 43 per cent in FAZ (Germany). The FAZ and Der Standard (Austria) show more variety than the other forums with four and six types of address, respectively. V address is the most common form of explicit addressivity in all forums except Der Kurier, ranging between 72 per cent (Der Standard) and 100 per cent (Tages-Anzeiger and NZZ, both Switzerland). While in the Swiss forums of our corpus, V is the only direct form of address used, the German forums clearly favour V, and one of the Austrian forums (Der Standard) presents a quite varied picture, while the other Austrian newspaper in our corpus, Der Kurier, only has one example of direct address. Nevertheless, the differences in the distribution of addressivity types by country were found to be highly significant.

However, it appears that differences in offline, face-to-face addressing practices between national varieties of German are less influential in online communication. The pragmatics of address
on German-language websites and the ways such ‘communities of addressing practice’ constitute themselves within online communities (see Stommel, 2008) seem to depend more on other factors. The most important are identification of contributors by real names or nicknames, individual preference of the contributors and type and social domain of the website. Newspaper forums occupy the middle ground between websites with a strong perception of community and commonalities, and thus a tendency to increased T use, and more formal online communication of a commercial or official nature. In Switzerland, the clear functional diglossia in Swiss German between dialect and Swiss Standard German also favours V address on Swiss Standard German websites.

Notes

1 See bmw.de; bahn.de; deutsche-bank.de; allianz.de; kadewe.de.
2 Most online forums indicate date and time of individual postings, but the NZZ and Tages-Anzeiger forums do not.
3 The contributor uses the old capital initial spelling for the singular T pronoun used exclusively for correspondence and now obsolete.
4 The lower case initial letter of the pronoun sie in the first line of the example would normally indicate that it stands for they rather than for the V address. In this case, however, while ‘chezgarando’ made the personal typographical choice of using lower case exclusively, sie is clearly the V pronoun. The sentence refers to an argument ‘wrdl brnft’ had made in the immediately preceding post. See the same spelling of the V pronoun in example (11).
5 http://derstandard.at/1371171480170/Du-Herr-Sektionschef, date accessed 24 April 2015; this comment is not part of this chapter’s dataset.
7 http://derstandard.at/plink/1392685660227?_pid=36162824#pid36162824, date accessed 15 December 2014; this comment is not part of this chapter’s dataset.
References


**Corpus**

Online newspaper articles with attached readers’ forums:

‘“Es kostet nicht die Welt, den Planeten zu retten”’, *Kurier*, 13 April 2014, http://kurier.at/politik/weltchronik/weltklimarat-es-kostet-nicht-die-


3

At the Cinema: The Swedish ‘du-reform’ in Advertising Films

Maria Fremer

Abstract: In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Swedish address forms underwent a radical and fairly swift change from an intricate system of formal address forms to a nearly universal use of the informal second singular du (‘you’). Fremer investigates early instances of du in advertising films. By focusing on the first examples of du found outside of the intimate contexts of family and close friends, the chapter argues that certain contexts, like rhymes and songs, or the use of inner dialogue, facilitated the use of du where formal address otherwise would have been expected – in this case, in addressing the viewers. The chapter also illustrates how changes in address practices went hand in hand with a general tendency in Swedish society towards informality.

Keywords: Swedish; du-reform; address pronouns; advertising films; social change

1 Introduction

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Swedish address forms underwent a radical and fairly swift change from an intricate system of using honorifics (such as herr, ‘Mr’, fru, ‘Ma’am’), titles and last names to address an interlocutor, to a nearly universal use of the informal second-person singular pronoun du (‘you’). This change, commonly referred to as the du-reform, was more far-reaching than the corresponding processes of informalization in English, French or German (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 7). The shift to a no-nonsense, egalitarian du (‘you’) represented a change from below (Labov, 1994) rather than being a prescribed reform from above. In other words, it was not the result of an effort on the part of language planners, but spread among ordinary language users. It has been described in earlier research, but mostly based on reported use (Ahlgren, 1978; Mårtensson, 1986; Tykesson-Bergman, 2006; Thelander, 2007). Due to a lack of suitable data from the relevant time period, there are very few attempts at analysing address forms in context, as they were used while the reform was taking place.

This chapter aims to help fill this gap by analysing a unique set of data that does reflect the change to du in real time: a series of commercials in the archival film collections of the Swedish Film Institute. These advertising films have great untapped potential for tracking language as well as societal change before, during and after the du-reform. In order to situate the study, the chapter opens with an overview of address practices in Swedish before the du-reform and as they are today. This is followed by an analysis of the use of du in the advertising film corpus. The general tendency in Sweden towards greater informality in public contexts, as well as the radical political climate around 1970, changed not only styles of address but also language in a more general sense, as well as the looks and behaviour of the protagonists in these film commercials. The chapter therefore investigates how changes in address practices went hand in hand with a society-wide shift towards informality in style and appearance.

2 Address in Swedish

Swedish has two address pronouns, du and ni, with corresponding object forms dig and er (or eder, an older form that appears in the data but is
obsolete today), as set out in Table 3.1. The possessive pronouns *din* and *er* follow the declination of adjectives – they agree with the gender and number of the head noun (again, the forms in brackets are older, now obsolete).

In contemporary Swedish, *du* is the dominant address pronoun. However, before the spread of *du* into almost all contexts in the late 1960s and early 1970s, honorifics, last names, titles and third-person address were also ubiquitous (Clyne, Norrby and Warren 2009, pp. 7–8). *Du* was used reciprocally – speakers giving and receiving *du* – within the family, between close friends and among children. *Ni* was used reciprocally between strangers in brief encounters in public places. In addition, *ni* was used non-reciprocally to people in subordinate positions, for instance, to sales assistants and employees, who responded by using the title of the addressee, such as *herrn* (‘Sir’), *frun* (‘Ma’am’) or *fröken* (‘Miss’) and no address pronoun. Titles could also be used reciprocally to indicate a polite distance between the speakers (Teleman, Hellberg and Andersson, 1999, pp. 266–70).

The non-reciprocal use of the formal pronoun *ni* towards people of lower status made it easy for *ni* to be perceived as an unfriendly and derogatory form of address. Address by title was generally preferable, but it could be difficult to know which title to use. In addition, address by title was, from a grammatical perspective, address in the third person, which was difficult to combine with pronominal address forms. Addressing someone by the third-person pronoun *hon* (‘shé’) or *han* (‘he’) was regarded as uneducated, and a shift from the third to the second person (*ni*) within a single utterance was not possible. Address by title thus entailed repetition of the title expression, which led to complicated formulations such as *Nu måste direktören skynda sig om direktören*

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**Table 3.1 Swedish address pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal (T)</td>
<td><em>du</em> (‘you’)</td>
<td><em>dig</em> (‘you’)</td>
<td><em>din, ditt, dina</em> (‘your’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal (V)</td>
<td><em>ni</em> (‘you’)</td>
<td><em>er (eder)</em> (‘you’)</td>
<td><em>er (eder), ert (edert), era (edra)</em> (‘your’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td><em>ni</em> (‘you’)</td>
<td><em>er (eder)</em> (‘you’)</td>
<td><em>er (eder), ert (edert), era (edra)</em> (‘your’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"vill komma i tid" (‘Now the manager must hurry if the manager wishes to arrive on time’).

Like many other languages Swedish developed a range of forms of expression that avoid direct address. Because of the complexities of using Swedish address terms, avoidance of direct address became an easy target for parody (Thelander, 2005). Some expressions have been conventionalized, and they are still frequently heard, especially in service interactions:

Vad får det vara? (literally ‘What will it be?’, meaning ‘Can I help you?’)

Hur var namnet? (literally ‘What was the name?’, meaning ‘What is your name?’)

Var det bra så? (literally ‘Was it good like that?’ meaning ‘Is that all?’)

The change towards universal *du* in the 1960s – the *du*-reform – is often associated with Bror Rexed, who became Director General of the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) in 1967. In his welcome speech for employees, he indicated that they all should address one another by *du*, whether managerial, administrative or service staff. He himself also expected to be called *du* and Bror. This was an important change in workplace practices and in the public sphere, beyond the factories and workshops where workers had long called each other *du* as a matter of course. The strong anchoring of *du* in the workers’ movement, along with leftward political trends, undoubtedly contributed to the rapid spread of *du*. The concept of equality became central to political debate, and the uniformization of address practices fitted this perfectly (Paulston, 1976; Mårtensson, 1986; Tykesson-Bergman, 2006).

Results from surveys and connotation tests on address conducted before and after the *du*-reform have been compared by Ahlgren (1978) and Mårtensson (1986), and address patterns in drama texts written before 1950 and after 1975 have been contrasted by Thelander (2007). However, there are practically no studies of data that reflect the change as it was actually taking place. An exception is Nowak and Andrén (1981) who show in purely quantitative terms how *ni* was replaced by *du* in print advertisements in the Swedish popular press between 1950 and 1975 (Figure 3.1).
Figure 3.1 shows that the change in the newspapers that Nowak and Andrén (1981) analyse begins around 1967. \textit{Ni} decreases rapidly starting from 1966, and the proportion of advertisements using \textit{du} increases quickly starting in 1968. \textit{Du} passes \textit{ni} in 1972 and continues to rise. The authors also note that the use of direct address in general decreases during the period when \textit{ni} is being replaced by \textit{du} – perhaps an indication that the advertisers avoided the controversial choice between two systems of address or were simply unsure of what form of address was appropriate. Similar tendencies have been reported by Tykesson-Bergman (2006), who investigates how customers are addressed in shopping contexts and the substantial changes that have occurred in interaction patterns since the 1960s.

Although \textit{du} has become the dominant form of address in Sweden, address is nonetheless far from simple. Heated debates about the use of formal and informal address forms have continued to occur in the daily papers (Mårtensson, 1986; Fremer, 1998; Norrby, Nilsson and Nyblom, 2007). Since the mid-1980s, there has also been talk of the re-emergence of \textit{ni} among young people, particularly in service encounters to address the older generation (Mårtensson, 1986). In surveys and interviews, many older Swedes report being irritated and even offended by being addressed as \textit{ni}, which consigns them to the ‘elderly person’ category, as they perceive it (Norrby, Nilsson and Nyblom, 2007).
3 Address practices in advertising films, 1915–75

Data from film and television offer the possibility of studying address practices in a context that resembles ordinary spoken language use. Such material is to a large extent fictional, directed and edited, but the recording of both sound and image can nonetheless offer fascinating insights compared to studies of texts or reported usage. This study uses advertising films from the online archive of the Swedish Film Institute at filmarkivet.se and Stockholmskällan at stockholmskallan.se. As Sweden had no TV advertisements until the 1990s, these films were shown in cinemas. My corpus consists of 116 advertising films dating from 1915 to 1975, and 16 episodes of Husmors filmer (‘Homemaker/Housewife’s films’) from 1958 to 1975. The oldest film in the online archive dates from 1915, and the cut-off year 1975 is motivated by the fact that the shift to general du was completed by then.

The advertising films are generally brief, from a few seconds to four minutes (a few are longer, up to 25 minutes). Most of them market a specific product or a company. Husmors filmer were shown for free at cinemas during the daytime. They have a different format: they are long (about 55 minutes per episode) and consist of advertising, informational and entertainment segments of varying length. The data comprise a total of around 20 hours. The 20 oldest films (1915–30) are silent films, in which address sometimes occurs in intertitles. The rest are sound films. The material has the advantage of being varied, with a large stock of characters. A second advantage is that the films sometimes address the viewer directly.

In this chapter, the focus is on how the viewer is addressed in the films. The instances found are highly comparable, because the addressee is in a sense always the same: anyone who happens to be in the audience. I have captured all unambiguous instances of direct address to the viewer by du or ni. I have limited the investigation to contexts where a change in addressing patterns could be expected to have occurred as a result of the du-reform. Subsequently I have not considered the use of du in family contexts or between characters depicted in the film as close friends. Nor have I considered ni in the plural form, or in such contexts where I could not determine whether the direct address was in the singular or plural. Due to space restrictions the present study does not discuss forms of address in dialogue.
I have divided the advertising films into two time periods, 1915–66 and 1967–75, given that the change is generally regarded as having begun in 1967. From the period before 1967 there are 11 short advertising films that address the viewer using *ni* (V address). In two of the advertising films *du* (T address) is used to address the viewer and in one both *du* (T) and *ni* (V) are used. In the period after 1967, there is not a single advertising film with V address. Instead, *du* occurs, albeit sparsely. It is, however, worth noting that *du* also occurs before the time of the *du*-reform. The proportion of films that contain direct viewer address has decreased somewhat over time, and the proportion of direct address in the films in general has decreased. In a similar way as Tykesson-Bergman (2006, p. 264) has shown for customer transactions, advertising films have become shorter and more ‘task-oriented’ over time: the focus is on the product, which is presented directly. The earliest films represent a time when the advertising film as a genre had not yet found its form. Some of these films are quite long and slow compared to the modern format and rapid tempo of the later films, which may be one reason for the higher frequency of direct address in the older films.

The *Husmors filmer* episodes also document the change in address forms from formal to informal, but the shift takes place somewhat later. The first use of *du* to address the viewer occurs in 1970. In contrast to the short advertising films, these films were directed toward a specific segment of the population as their audience: women who were keen to fulfil their role as housewives. Most of the advertisements in these films are about shopping for groceries, cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry.

### 3.1 Use of singular *ni* (V address) to the viewer

There are several advertising films in which the viewer is addressed with *ni*. Example (1) is from 1939, with the formal form *eder* (‘you.V, your.V’). All instances of address pronouns in the examples appear in bold. The year of broadcast is given in brackets under each example. The syntax shows that the *ni*-form is singular: a plural *ni* would require the plural forms *edra familjer* in example (1), and the plural forms *fria, friska, fräscha* (‘free, healthy, fresh’) in example (2).

1. Även *ni* can bereda *eder* och *eder* familj glädje med ett kort från Polyfoto
   ‘You.v too can bring yourself.v and your.v family joy with a picture from Polyfoto’ (Polyfoto 1939)
In a series of four advertisements for Bris soap from the early 1950s (example (2)), the following slogan is repeated on a text banner and sometimes also in dialogue:

(2) Bris gör er fri, frisk, fräsch
‘Bris makes you free, healthy, fresh’

The viewer is also addressed by ni in the following car advertisement from 1963 (example (3)), where I interpret the ni as singular because of the visual content of the film: the picture shows only one (male) person in close-up. He is being addressed by the narrator, who is also clearly addressing the viewer.

(3) Vad gör ni då? Går ni i biltankar? Jaha, och jämför, förstås. Säg, har ni jämfört med Fiat Juventus?
‘What are you doing? Are you thinking about (buying) a car? Yes, and comparing, of course. Say, have you compared with Fiat Juventus?’
(Fiat Juventus 1963)

The following advertisement for hairspray, also from 1963, (example (4)) has the same set-up, although the person shown is a woman:

(4) Med Helen Curtis nya Go Gay Hair Spray kan ni variera frisyr.
‘With Helen Curtis’ new Go Gay Hair Spray you can vary your hairdo.’
(Go Gay 1963)

In the shorter advertising films, use of ni to address the viewer does not occur after 1963, but in Husmors filmer there are isolated examples into the 1970s. The programmes contain several segments, and different speakers may turn to the audience using different forms of address. In example (5) from 1970, the presenter Birgitta Andersson gives facetious advice as to how the housewife can handle her difficult husband when he comes home from work. (In the examples from Husmors filmer, the source is given with a time code.)

Har ni en flitig man, möt honom redan i dörren med middagen, så att ätandet inte stjäl för mycket av hans dybara tid. ...

Har ni en själupptagen och mycket tankspridd make fordras det krafttag. Hjälp honom tillrätta med tydliga skyltar. Ge honom gärna en lapp med repliker, så att ni får just dom komplimanger ni själv vill ha.

‘Can one do anything about things like this, you.v wonder. Yes, sure one can! If, for example, you.v have a small, insecure husband, roll out the red carpet. Give him a royal reception. Have the children stand up and wave with flags in their hand and shout hurrah. Give a little welcome speech in which you.v concoct some charming lie. Pretend you.v are a press photographer and take a few pictures of him. ...

If you.v have a hardworking husband, already meet him at the door with dinner, so that eating does not steal too much of his precious time. ...

If you.v have a self-absorbed and very absent-minded spouse, forceful methods are required. Help him to get settled in with clear signs. Give him a sheet of paper with lines, so that you.v receive exactly those compliments you.v (your)self want to hear.’ (Husmors filmer hösten [‘autumn’] 1970, 35:50)

The formal address in this and certain other episodes is clearly part of the joke. Andersson is having fun with the genre of films for housewives, which were earlier characterized by seriously intended good advice on how to take care of one’s household – a style that by this time must have begun to seem old fashioned even for those who produced the programmes.

Forms of address may thus be used humorously, and in the case of old films it may sometimes be difficult to interpret precisely what is meant as a joke and what should be perceived as ordinary unmarked address. *Husmors filmer*, however, contain occasional examples of unmarked use of *ni* in the singular to address the viewer as late as 1973. In example (6), from an advertisement for make-up, the adjective *nöjd* (‘satisfied’) is singular – the plural form would be *nöjda*.

(6) Om ni inte skulle bli nöjd med någon produkt från Avon så kan ni få den utbytt och ta någonting annat i stället. Eller också får ni pengarna tillbaka.

‘If you.v are not satisfied with an Avon product, you.v may exchange it and receive something else instead. Or else you.v can get (your) money back.’ (Husmors filmer våren [‘spring’] 1973, 8:00)
It is clear that singular *ni* is used in many advertisements as an unmarked form of address to the viewer. This is somewhat surprising since *ni* was regarded at the time as inappropriate for most contexts and even as condescending. These instances of *ni* are clearly unmarked: to show a condescending attitude toward the audience would be self-destructive for an advertiser. The advertising films could possibly be compared to brief and impersonal encounters between strangers in public places (for example, asking for the time), which was one of the acceptable contexts for singular *ni*. The advertisements are, however, fairly long and personal. The only reasonable analysis is therefore that the negative attitudes toward *ni* did not pertain to the word itself, but to the use of *ni* in specific situations in which address by title was expected – which was not the case in the advertisements. Address by title in the singular cannot generally be used in an advertising film, which is directed towards anyone who happens to see it. If singular *ni* had been completely inappropriate, direct address could easily have been avoided altogether or replaced with plural address. This is not the case, which indicates that address with *ni* from the film screen to anyone in the audience was fully acceptable in the context of advertisements until the late 1960s.

3.2 Use of *du* (T address) to the viewer in the 1950s

In the older advertising films, *du*, as expected, occurs almost exclusively between people who are presented as a family or close friends. Viewer address with *du* does, however, occur in three films from the 1950s. This deviates from the common understanding, according to which *du* could only be used in familiar contexts or to children.

The first example of *du* to address the viewer occurs in 1951 in an advertisement for the bank Sparbanken (‘Savings Bank’). The film presents ‘naïve’, animated Dalecarlian-style3 figures, and the narrator’s voice retells in verse form the Biblical story of the seven lean and seven fat cows. The final verse goes as follows:

(7) Bestäm dig nu min vän som så
    var dag ska spardag bli
    När onda dagar kommer på
    din Sparbank står dig bi.
‘So now, my friend you. t choose the way,  
every day should be a saving day  
When the bad days arrive  
your. t Savings bank is on your. t side.’  
(Dalmålningar på film Sju magra och sju feta kor ‘Dalecarlian paintings in film Seven lean and seven fat cows’ 1951)

Direct address to a customer using du (and also min vän, ‘my friend’) would, according to Tykesson-Bergman (2006), have been inconceivable at this time. However, the film is structured essentially as a fable, and the visual ‘naivety’ combined with the rhyming form creates a fairy-tale impression, in which the du form emerges as unmarked. It is not a bank employee who addresses a customer, but rather a storyteller who approaches his audience with a well-known Biblical story.

The following examples of du addressed to the viewer are taken from a chewing gum advertisement from 1956 featuring the then well-known singer Alice Babs. The film is intended for both a Swedish and a Norwegian audience, and some of the words are thus Norwegian. At the beginning of the film, Babs appears as a skier amid mountain peaks, full of fun. She addresses the viewer using du:

(8) Du må prøve å gjette nu  
‘you. t can try to guess now’

This is followed by a song. In the song lyrics, Babs continues to address the viewer with du:

(9) Om du är i Tromsö eller Lund  
Hvis du är i Oslo, Östersund  
Gör detsamma, ingen risk  
För Toy finns på var disk  
‘If you. t are in Tromsö or Lund  
If you. t are in Oslo, Östersund  
Makes no difference, here or there  
Toy is available everywhere’

The song is followed by a few lines in which she uses ni:

(10) Ja-a vet ni, det känns nästan som om jag expedierade er själv när jag nu sitter på varenda Toykartong i både Sverige och Norge. Som om det var direkt av mig ni fick er Toy. Vore allt bra kul förresten, att stå där bakom disken och se kunden komma in, styra stegen mot Toykartongen, ta ett Toy, titta upp, och där står flickan från kartongen livslevande. Det
The Swedish ‘du-reform’ in Advertising Films

The transition from *du* to *ni* occurs precisely at the same moment as Alice Babs shifts from being a sporty mountain girl to a sales assistant in a shop (see Figure 3.2). This advertisement shows how *du* can be used in jest and rhyme, but also how the role of sales assistant carries with it a shift to the formal term of address. In real life, address by title would have been expected from an assistant to a customer, but in the film the assistant is addressing anyone in the audience, which makes it impossible to use any singular title.

Example (11) shows *du* used to address the viewer in a 1958 advertisement for an insurance company. The narrator’s voice addresses the male protagonist in the film, but at the same time also the viewer (the imagined policy buyer, the family breadwinner).

(11) **Du** var visst inte riktigt på humör då **du** gick hemifrån i morse. Inför **ditt** barns, **din** hustrus frågande ögon kände **du** ansvaret som en tyngd. Så går dagen, och **du** försöker skjuta problemen ifrån **dig**. Men oron i **dina** käras ögon tränger fram var **du** än befinner **dig**, vådjar om svar. – **Stanna!** **Du** måste ta ställning! **Idag! Nu!** Det finns ju en hand som kan och vill hjälpa **dig** att bära ansvaret. **Städernas. Lägg** **din** hand i **Städernas. För** **din** och familjens trygghet.
‘You. 𝑡 were indeed not in a good mood when you. 𝑡 left home this morning. Before the questioning eyes of your. 𝑡 child, your. 𝑡 wife, you. 𝑡 felt the responsibility as a burden. Then the day goes on and you. 𝑡 try to push the problems away from you. 𝑡. But the worry in your. 𝑡 dear ones’ eyes emerges wherever you. 𝑡 happen to find yourself. 𝑡, pleading for an answer. Stop! You. 𝑡 must take a stand! Today! Now! There is a hand that can and will help you. 𝑡 to carry this responsibility. Städernas. Place your. 𝑡 hand in that of Städernas. For your. 𝑡 and (your) family’s security.’ (Städernas försäkring ‘City insurance’ 1958)

The mood in the advertisement is almost menacing. Gloomy cello notes accompany the plaintive gazes of the wife and children, and the narrator’s voice is like an internal voice of conscience rather than an insurance salesman. A salesman would hardly have used *du* to the family father in the film at the time nor to the viewer. There are at least two similar examples in *Husmors filmer* where inner dialogue or thoughts are formulated with *du*. In example (12) from 1963 an internal voice of conscience (a male narrator’s voice) conducts a dialogue with the female protagonist in an advertisement for low-calorie diet biscuits.

(12) Kvinnan: Nå, varför säger *du* ingenting?
Samvetet: Vad ska jag säga?
Kvinnan: Att jag är svag, att jag inte har någon karaktär. Förresten, *du* som är mitt samvete borde väl veta?
‘Woman: Well, why aren’t you. 𝑡 saying anything?
Conscience: What should I say?
Woman: That I am weak; that I have no character. By the way, surely you. 𝑡 as my conscience ought to know?’
(Husmors filmer våren [‘spring’] 1963, 25:40)

The same episode of *Husmors filmer* also contains a segment in which five girls in a home economics school are on a study tour to see the ‘coffee master’ Lars Boisen, who is going to teach them to make coffee in the right way. The segment begins with the narrator’s voice introducing the girls by their first names, after which the coffee master turns and addresses them (example (13)).

(13)  – Nu vet jag vad ni flickor tänker. ‘Ska *du* lille gubbe komma och lära mig att koka kaffe? Det kan jag väl redan förut.’
‘– Now I know what you girls are thinking. “Are you. 𝑡, old man, going to teach me to make coffee? As if I didn’t know how.”’
(Husmors filmer våren [‘spring’] 1963 15:50)
For the girls to actually address the teacher in this way in real life was inconceivable at the time. In this case, the teacher is taking on the role of the young women and imagining what they are thinking. The tone is sarcastic rather than moralizing, and the use of _du_ reinforces this.

The examples discussed show that _du_ can be used to address the viewer to create a particular effect: in conjunction with rhyme, games and jest (examples (7)–(9)) or for a type of internal voice (examples (11)–(13)). The fact that inner voices of various types use _du_ is consistent with the idea that formal address is superimposed, something that is ‘put on’ in specific social situations that require formality, in a similar way to a tie or some other more formal item of clothing.

### 3.3 Use of _du_ (T address) as the unmarked form of address after 1967

The newer advertising films contain only a few examples of _du_ to address the viewer, but there is a clear change in type. The following insurance advertisement (example (14)) is from 1967, the year in which the _du_-reform took hold – and the year when Sweden switched to right-hand traffic. In this example again, the narrator’s voice addresses a person shown in an image, but at the same time approaches the audience.

(14) Åh _du_, det här var ett marigt läge! Ja det här med att köra ut åt vänster från vänster sida i högertrafik. Det är så lätt att köra på fel sida. Men kör så här, så slipper _du_ göra bort _dig_.

‘Oh, you.τ, this is a nasty situation! Well, this exiting to the left from the left side of the road in right-hand traffic. It’s so easy to end up on the wrong side. But drive like this, so you.τ don’t make a fool of yourself.τ.’ (Högertrafik ‘Right-hand traffic’ 1967)

It becomes very clear that the address is directed at the viewer as the narrator looks directly at the camera when he utters the final words: _så slipper du göra bort dig_ (‘so you.τ don’t make a fool of yourself.τ’) (see Figure 3.3). This expression, like also _Åh du_ (‘Oh, you.τ’) and _ett marigt läge_ (‘a nasty situation’), and the narrator’s unbuttoned short-sleeved shirt, contribute to a very relaxed and informal tone in comparison to the 1958 insurance advertisement (example (11)).
Example (15) is from a 1975 advertisement for facial cleanser in which a narrator also uses *du* to address the viewer and the actor using the product:


‘Make the cotton swab test. You see: Clearasil facial cleanser cleans greasy skin deep into the pores.’

(Clearasil lotion 1975)

*Du* in these films is the natural and unmarked form of address, and this new informality is also reflected in much more than the form of address, such as the general appearance and style of clothing of the characters.

In *Husmors filmer*, viewer address with *du* first occurs in 1970, with *du* frequency highest in the final films from 1974 and 1975, which would fit with changing societal norms. The 1970 example is in a rhymed verse, which can be compared with examples (7)–(9) where the narrator takes on a particular role or stance. A long litany of practical household tips is shown at the same time as the narrator’s voice reads the following:

(16) Lägg ett helt paket i pannan het
så kan du det dela med enkelhet
In 1974 another change occurs, when the programme presenter begins to address the viewer with *du*. This happens in the following segment on test strips for urinary tract infections:

(17) *‘Did you know that one in twenty women has a urinary tract infection without even knowing about it? One woman in twenty – it could be you. Or me. But now one can test oneself with the BM Test Nitrit, and it is very simple. The test strip is dipped into morning urine. If it turns red, you have an infection. If it does not turn red but you still feel discomfort when you wee, for instance, then go see the doctor, just in case.’* (Husmors filmer våren ['spring'] 1974, 28:10)

The shift to *du* to address the viewer goes hand in hand with a more open attitude to discussing potentially embarrassing or dangerous issues such as driving on the wrong side of the road (example (14)), having skin problems (example (15)) or a urinary tract infection (example (17)) (the presenter’s *eller jag*, ‘or me’, in the latter example is, however, a hedge that in this case feels necessary, by implying that this is a shared problem). The older advertising films do not touch on any such personal or embarrassing topics.
Presenters display variation in the use of address forms, which suggests that they were able to choose how to address the audience. Examples (18a) and (18b) from Husmors filmer are for the same product, a magazine. In the first from 1974, the presenter addresses the viewer with *du*, whereas in the second from the following year, a different presenter addresses the viewer/audience with *ni* (possibly in the plural – in this case it is ambiguous) and uses the indefinite *man* (‘one’). In other respects, the contexts are essentially identical, with a presenter in the studio who faces the camera and addresses the audience directly.

(18a) För några dagar sedan fick *du* tidningen Hon & Han i brevlådan. Som vanligt finns det bra tips och goda råd i den, och så glöm inte rabattkupongerna och Hon & Hans rabattvaror. Om *du* utnyttjar alla erbjudandena så spar *du* faktiskt en hel del pengar. ‘A few days ago you received the magazine *Hon & Han* (‘She & He’) in the mailbox. As usual, there are good tips and good advice in it, and don’t forget the savings coupons and the discount items from *Hon & Han*. If you make use of all the offers, you actually save a lot of money.’ (Husmors filmer våren [‘spring’] 1974, 29:10)

(18b) För ett par dagar sedan fick *ni* den här tidningen, Hon & Han, i brevlådan. Där finns rabattkuponger och *ni* kan också köpa Hon & Hans rabattvaror. Man sparar faktiskt en hel del pengar om *man* utnyttjar dom. ‘A few days ago you received this magazine, *Hon & Han*, in (your) mailbox. There are savings coupons and you can also buy *Hon & Han* discount items. One actually saves a lot of money if one makes use of them.’ (Husmors filmer våren [‘spring’] 1975, 16:00)

A 1975 advertisement for skin cream (example (19)) included in Husmors filmer uses the first clear attestation of a generic use of *du* – that is, where the speaker does not address the viewer-recipient directly, but rather appears to speak about herself, or anyone in a comparable situation (Fremer, 2000).

The Swedish ‘du-reform’ in Advertising Films

‘And the fact that you.τ never become shiny from it! Take any ordinary cream: your.τ face becomes greasy and shiny, and you.τ don’t look smart.... you.τ can find it in department stores and perfume shops, I’ve even seen it in a paint shop. So you.τ can go there and buy it if you.τ want.’ (Husmors filmer våren [‘spring’] 1975, 33:40)

The function of du in example (19) approaches that of the indefinite pronoun man (‘one’). The generic use of du has now become common in parallel use with ‘man’, but before the du-reform it would hardly have been conceivable.

4 Concluding discussion

In this chapter, I have illustrated the pervasive character of the change to du through a study of address practices in Swedish advertising films, from the beginnings of the genre until the mid-1970s. I have closely examined those films in which direct address to the audience occurs. The examples are not numerous, but they do indicate a change: from dominant use of ni and a few exceptions using du, there is a shift in these films to an unmarked and natural use of du, while singular ni disappears completely.

The change in address practices, as Tykesson-Bergman (2006) among others has pointed out, goes hand in hand with a general informalization of language use in Sweden. The films indicate pervasive changes in conduct as well. Voice and articulation are intimately connected with the linguistic changes. During the period of the du-reform, advertising films start to feature people talking with their mouths full, talking while brushing their teeth, smacking their lips and speaking with creaky voices. The contrast with the earlier films with perfect, enunciated recitation is striking. It would have been completely inconceivable to appear, for instance, with one’s mouth full, even in jocular contexts, before the du-reform.

In the same way, there are striking changes that occur on the purely visual level. Clothing, appearance, conduct and the way of speaking all seem to go through the same informalization process. In the advertising films, people with scruffy hairdos start to appear, sometimes dressed in the colourful underwear typical of the time – even in advertisements

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that are not directly about undergarments. There is nothing of the sort in the earlier films: the characters are well coiffed and well dressed and behave overall in a formal manner.

Gender roles also become more flexible in conjunction with the du-reform. Many of the early films are clearly intended for either women (hairspray, example (4)) or men (cars, example (3), insurance in example (11)). By the 1970s, by contrast, there is an advertising segment in Husmors filmer in which a man sorts laundry.

Swedish linguist Gun Widmark (1994, p. 223) has written about how she experienced both the old and the new address practices. It is striking that she chooses a metaphor of changing into more comfortable clothes to describe how the change felt for her (translation from Swedish original by Kendra Willson):

Both *ni* and all the fine nouns used for address were gone with the wind. The stage was taken instead by the little address pronoun *du*, completely overlooked in the *ni*-discussion. At a rapid pace, we threw out all the confining fine clothing and enjoyed the easy attire of the *du*-suit. How on earth did we, after centuries of unnaturalness, suddenly find such an unexpected end to our address problems?

Widmark’s view of the change is thus unambiguously positive, and this was probably the case in general, since such an overwhelming shift to *du* took place in such a short time, and remains today so dominant as a form of address in Swedish.

This chapter has charted how the viewer – represented by any and all of the audience in the cinema – was addressed in the advertising films. The results show that singular *ni* was replaced by *du* to address the viewer and that this lowering in formality went hand in hand with other signs of informality, such as the general appearance of the protagonists. The analysis of the pre-1967 commercials was particularly revealing, adding to our understanding of the many nuances of the Swedish address system before the *du*-reform. Some used singular *ni* as an unmarked form of address to the viewer, and others used *du* to create a particular effect or to represent an internal voice. The next stage in the study of this unique dataset will focus on dialogues between characters in the much longer *Husmors filmer*. These should provide further illuminating insights into the complexities of address patterns at a time of profound changes in Swedish society.
Notes

1 My thanks to Kendra Willson who translated the submitted version of this chapter from Swedish into English.
2 I am indebted to the Swedish Film Institute who granted me permission to use their archival film collections for this study.
3 Dalecarlian painting is a very traditional style of painting from the province Dalarna in Sweden.

References


4

Address and Interpersonal Relationships in Finland–Swedish and Sweden–Swedish Service Encounters

Catrin Norrby, Camilla Wide, Jenny Nilsson and Jan Lindström

Abstract: The chapter investigates address practices in 318 audio- and video-recorded service encounters at theatre box offices and other booking venues equally distributed across the two national varieties of Swedish, Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish. The results demonstrate compelling variation in address choices, which can be linked to participant roles (customer-staff), generation (below and above 50 years) and national variety. Overall informal address with T (du) is the most common address form in both varieties and is particularly salient among older customers in Sweden. There are few occurrences of V address in the data, and most are found among younger Finland-Swedish staff.

Key words: Finland Swedish; Sweden Swedish; pluricentric language; service encounters; address pronouns

1 Introduction

Many of our daily interactions consist of brief encounters between a service provider and a customer who carry out a goal-oriented transaction. Typically, such interactions take place between strangers who jointly need to complete a task and where it is crucial to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships throughout the transaction; for example, by means of address choice. This chapter focuses on address practices in naturally occurring service encounters at theatre box offices and similar in the two national varieties of Swedish: Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish.

Previous research on Swedish as a pluricentric language, that is a language with more than one national centre (Clyne, 1992), has largely focused on how the non-dominant variety, Finland Swedish, differs from the dominant variety, Sweden Swedish, in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax (Reuter, 1992; Wide and Lyngfelt, 2009). However, differences in pragmatic routines and interactional patterns, such as address practices, have attracted much less research interest to date, with the exception of a few small-scale interactional studies (Saari, 1995; Fremer, 1996). While informal address patterns dominate in both Swedish national varieties, formal address has been reported to occur more frequently in Finland Swedish (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 132–9). Service encounters provide a good basis for exploring potential national differences in actual address usage as they typically involve brief interactions between strangers, a context where more formal address can be expected to occur.

The data for this study were collected for the bi-national research programme Interaction and variation in pluricentric languages. Communicative patterns in Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish. This research programme aims to contribute to the body of work on pluricentric languages by comparing pragmatic and interactional patterns in institutional contexts, in the domains of service, higher education and healthcare in the national varieties of Swedish. To our knowledge, this is the first large-scale comparison of pragmatic and interactional patterns in different varieties of pluricentric languages in general. Furthermore, it provides the first systematic comparison between Finland-Swedish and Sweden-Swedish interactions based on a large corpus of authentic face-to-face conversations.

The chapter is organized as follows. In section 2 we give a background on Swedish as a pluricentric language and the Swedish address system. Section 3 presents the data of the study. In section 4 the quantitative
results are discussed followed by a qualitative analysis in section 5. Section 6 summarizes and discusses the findings.

2 Background

2.1 Swedish as a pluricentric language

Swedish is the main language in Sweden and one of two official languages in Finland, alongside Finnish. In Sweden the vast majority of the population of about 9.7 million (Statistics Sweden, 2015) has Swedish as their first language. The Swedish-speaking Finns constitute a linguistic minority of 5.3 per cent of the Finnish population of about 5.5 million (Statistics Finland, 2015). It is a minority with a strong legal, economical and cultural position, as a result of historical circumstances (Liebkind, Moring and Tandefelt, 2007). Finland formed part of the Swedish kingdom until 1809 when it became part of the Russian empire. However, Swedish remained the language of the public sphere until Finnish slowly replaced it after Finland gained independence at the beginning of the 20th century (Saari, 2012).

2.2 Swedish address

Similar to many languages, Swedish distinguishes between an informal and a formal pronoun of address in the singular, often referred to as T and V pronouns after Latin tu and vos (Brown and Gilman, 1960). Superficially, the Swedish address system is similar to the French, where the second-person plural pronoun (vous in French and ni in Swedish) also functions as a formal pronoun of address to one person. However, contrary to French, use of V address (ni) is rare in contemporary Swedish, leaving the informal T address (du) as the default choice in most contexts and to most interlocutors (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 7). Table 4.1 illustrates the Swedish address system.

Table 4.1 T and V forms in Swedish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less formal (T)</td>
<td>du (‘you’)</td>
<td>dig (‘you’)</td>
<td>din, ditt, dina* (‘your’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More formal (V)</td>
<td>ni (‘you’)</td>
<td>er (‘you’)</td>
<td>er, ert, era (‘your’)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>ni (‘you’)</td>
<td>er (‘your’)</td>
<td>er, ert, era (‘your’)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* inflected to agree with the gender and number of the head noun
Thus, despite the apparent binary system, in actual functional terms contemporary Swedish address practices are more similar to the English system where there is only one pronoun of address (you). However, the ubiquitous use of the T pronoun is itself a fairly recent development. In the past 50 to 60 years, the Swedish address system has undergone a radical shift from a high level of formality characterized by the pervasiveness of titles and avoidance of direct address altogether; for example, by the use of passive constructions (Vad önskas?, ‘What is desired?’), the indefinite pronoun man (‘one’) and other impersonal constructions as well as addressing somebody in the third person (Vad tror doktorn det kan vara?, ‘What does the doctor think it could be?’). In Sweden, avoidance of direct address was linked to the negative connotations that the formal pronoun, ni, had attracted through its non-reciprocal use. A person in an inferior social position – somebody without a title – could be addressed by ni, but would be expected to respond by using the other person’s title (Ahlgren, 1978; Fremer, Chapter 3 of this volume). The social stigma attached to ni led to a cumbersome social situation where strangers tended to avoid address altogether in order to not offend the other person (for an overview, see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 7–8). However, in Finland Swedish, use of ni has been considered less problematic and is still available as a resource for politeness, albeit not a very common pattern (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 132–9).

A major contributing factor to the rapid shift to almost universal du in Sweden in just a few decades was the awkward social situation just described, but it was also a result of the political ideals that gained ground in the 1960s and paved the way for egalitarian and democratic forms of address (Paulston, 1976; Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 8). While similar changes have taken place in society in Finland, they did not affect the address practices to the same extent (Saari, 1995). Nonetheless, already in the 1980s there were reports of ni being re-introduced in service encounters in Sweden to express polite respect for an unacquainted, older customer (Mårtensson, 1986). This “new ni” has attracted considerable, and mostly negative attention – for example, in letters to the editor – and it is often assumed that it has spread widely. However, research based on reported address usage and participant observation, suggests that the new ni is limited to certain contexts, such as upmarket restaurants and shops, where ni seems to be ‘a thin social veneer, which disappears as soon as the participant roles change ever so slightly’ (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 112).
3 Data

The empirical data for the present study consist of 318 interactions that were audio and video recorded at seven theatre box offices and event-booking venues in Finland and Sweden. The data were collected in Helsinki and Turku in Finland, and in Gothenburg, Karlstad, and Stockholm in Sweden in 2013 and 2014. Typically, these are goal-oriented interactions where customers buy tickets to or request information about theatre performances and other events. The interactions are between 11 seconds and 13 minutes long, and take place in Swedish between a total of 318 customers and 16 service providers (henceforth referred to as staff). Table 4.2 gives an overview of the participants of this study. As the table shows, there are clearly fewer staff members in the Finland-Swedish data. This is linked to the societal circumstances in Finland; given the lower number of L1 speakers of Swedish, sales at theatre box offices and similar in Swedish are naturally smaller scale and operated by fewer people in Finland.

The customers vary greatly in age, but for the purposes of this study, the participants were divided into two age groups: younger than 50 and older than 50. This division is motivated by the historical development and changes in the Swedish address practices with the late 1960s being a pivotal point (see section 2.1; Fremer, Chapter 3 of this volume). Also with only 30 customers below 30 years of age, it is not meaningful to divide the data into further age brackets. Table 4.3 outlines the age distribution of the staff and customers.

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**Table 4.2 Participants in the service encounter study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Age range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19–64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25–58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.3 Age distribution among staff and customers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below 50</td>
<td>Above 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Service encounters are an example of institutional discourse; that is, interactions where at least one participant functions in a professional role. A professional can be defined as a socially ratified and sanctioned expert (Linell, 1990). In our service encounter data there is always one professional, a staff member, and at least one layperson, a customer. Institutional interactions are goal-oriented activities where participants, who usually do not know each other beforehand, collaborate to solve the task at hand or to carry out a transaction (Drew and Heritage, 1992). While such interactions are result-oriented, this fact, however, does not preclude instances of relational activities, such as introducing private topics, joking and laughter (Nelson, 2014).

4 Quantitative results

In this section we present an overview of how customers and staff use, or do not use, address pronouns in the data. While there are many customers, all of whom participate in only one service encounter with one individual staff member, each staff member serves a large number of customers. Despite this difference between customers and staff, it is relevant to investigate the address practices within both groups and make comparisons where possible. The perspective is comparative, contrasting address patterns in the Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish datasets.

We begin by discussing address choice in the customer group. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the overall patterns among customers in the two age groups in Finland and Sweden respectively. The address patterns used by the customers are *du* (T), *ni* with plural reference, both *du* and plural *ni*, and no direct address. Distinguishing between *ni* as a plural address form, and *ni* as a polite form of address (V) cannot be established on purely structural grounds since Swedish lacks verbal inflexion for number and person (but the distinction is tangible in adjectival concord, see section 5.2, example (9)). Potentially ambiguous cases of *ni* have to be interpreted in the situational context as well as through the researchers’ overall sociocultural understanding as members of the respective speech communities. Since *du* is the most prevalent address form in both varieties of Swedish and *ni* is primarily used as a plural form, only cases where *ni* clearly functions as a polite form to address one person have been counted as V address. In fact, none of the customers – neither in Finland nor Sweden – use V address in this non-ambiguous way.

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It should also be noted that the quantitative overviews in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 are based on whether a particular form (T address, V address or plural ni) occurs at least once in a particular interaction, not on the number of occurrences found in each interaction. The category ‘T only’ means that no other address pronouns than du are used in the interactions. Similarly, ‘Plural ni only’ indicates that no other direct address pronoun is used. However, in some interactions, several of the address patterns above occur; in particular this is the case when staff are speaking to customers. Accordingly, it has been necessary to include categories with the combinations of forms that occur in the data (e.g., ‘T and plural ni’). ‘No address’ refers to interactions where no address pronoun is used. FS refers to Finland Swedish and SS to Sweden Swedish in both figures.

A closer inspection of the data in Figure 4.1 reveals that T only is by far the most dominant address pattern used by Swedish customers aged 50 or older (79 per cent). Older customers in Finland also tend to use T only, but to a lesser extent (54 per cent). Younger customers in both countries, on the other hand, use T only in fewer interactions. In particular, this is the case in Sweden where only a third (34 per cent) of the younger customers address staff with T only, compared to 43 per cent of younger customers in Finland. Instead, many younger customers do not use any direct address pronouns at all (for discussion see section 5.2).

![Figure 4.1: Customers’ use of address forms (T only; T and plural ni; plural ni only; no address)](image-url)
For younger Swedish customers, this is the most common pattern, with 53 per cent not addressing the staff member directly. This is in sharp contrast to older Swedish customers where only 11 per cent interact with staff without addressing them directly. In Finland, younger customers also use direct address in proportionally fewer interactions than the older ones, but the generational discrepancy is far less pronounced compared to Sweden. In other words, the greatest discrepancy in address practices is to be found between younger and older customers in Sweden.

There are also some instances of plural *ni* – situations where the customer addresses the establishment in general rather than the individual staff (for examples, see section 5.3). Both age groups in both countries use the plural *ni* to a similar extent (approximately 10–20 per cent when also co-occurrences with T address (*du*) are counted).

We now turn to how the staff interact with customers. As Figure 4.2 shows, there is more variation in address use among staff compared to customers, especially in the Finland-Swedish data and among younger

![Figure 4.2](image-url)
Finland-Swedish staff in particular. Use of T is the most common pattern in three of the staff categories. In about half of the interactions, the older staff in both countries use T only (Sweden 58 per cent, Finland 46 per cent). For younger staff, there is, however, a clear difference between the two national varieties: in Sweden, T only is used in two-thirds of the interactions, compared to one-quarter in Finland. V address to customers is used almost exclusively by Finland-Swedish staff, where three out of four staff members use V at least in some of the interactions. The highest share of V address is found among the younger staff members from Finland (26 per cent, if all categories involving V are taken into account). The older staff member who uses V address does so only in a few cases. In the Sweden-Swedish data there is only one instance of V address altogether: a 27-year-old staff member who addresses a 42-year-old customer by ni (V) once, but then switches to T address (see example (9)).

All four staff members in Finland and nine of the 12 staff in Sweden do not address the customer directly in some of the interactions. The greatest proportion of no address can be found among the younger Finland-Swedish staff (40 per cent of the interactions). Finally, use of plural ni (alone or together with T or V) ranges from 34 per cent among older staff in Finland to 13 per cent among younger staff in Sweden.

To summarize, the overall trend in both countries is that the younger customers use less direct T address and often no address at all, compared to older customers. In Sweden this trend is particularly pronounced: only 40 per cent of younger customers address staff with T (on its own or together with plural ni) compared to 90 per cent of older customers. However, among the staff the trend is different. Both younger and older staff in Sweden use T (on its own or together with plural ni or V) in about 75 per cent of the interactions. In Finland, there is a noticeable difference between younger and older staff. Whereas the older staff use T address in a total of 65 per cent of the interactions, the younger staff use T address in less than 30 per cent of the interactions. These findings are discussed in more detail in section 6.

5 Qualitative analysis

In this section, we turn to a qualitative analysis of the address patterns in the data starting with T address.
5.1 T address (du)

As the quantitative overview illustrates, the most common pattern in the data is direct T address (du). In this section we show some typical cases. The first two examples show customer use of T address (C = customer and S = staff). Example (1) is sourced from Sweden’s national theatre and example (2) from its Swedish-language counterpart in Finland.

(1) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), female customer (66 years)
01 C: hejsan (0.8) ja tänkte fråga dig (0.3) lite men ja har nämligen
‘hi, I wanted to ask you.t something, I have you see’
02 ett (0.3) presentkort
‘a gift card’
03 S: mm
‘mm’
04 C: som går ut den tjuåttonde i tolfte
‘which expires on the twenty-eight of December’

(2) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (25 years), female customer (54 years)
01 C: jå (.) vad rekommenderar du att vilken tid ska man komma
‘yes, what do you.t recommend, what time should one be there’
02 S: det kan vara bra att vara där kring kvart före så (.)
‘it can be good to be there around quarter to’
03 det e ju ändå slutsålt (.) kanske lite tidigare till å med
‘it is sold out, anyway perhaps even a little bit earlier’

In both examples, the customers address the staff directly with T (du, dig) when asking for information, jag tänkte fråga dig (‘I wanted to ask you’) in example (1) and vad rekommenderar du (‘what do you recommend’) in example (2). Examples (3) and (4) show typical cases of staff members’ use of du (T).

(3) Theatre box office, Sweden: female staff (55 years), female customer (70 years)
01 S: då ska vi se å du va en pensionär (sa du)
‘let’s see then and you.t are a senior citizen you.t said’
02 C: ja
‘yes’
03 (19.8)
04 S: nu ska vi se (0.4) vad hade du för telefonnummer
‘now let’s see what is your.t phone number’
(4) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (53 years), female customer (67 years)

01 S: så där å en biljett sa [du]
    ‘there and one ticket you said’
02 C: [en]
    ‘one’
03 (5.2)
04 S: åja behöver ditt telefonnummer
    ‘and I need your phone number’

In line 1 in both examples (3) and (4), the staff members use T address for checking that they have the correct details: *en pensionär sa du* (‘a senior you said?’), *en biljett sa du* (‘one ticket you said?’). In line 4 in both examples, the staff members ask for further information they need for carrying out the transaction: *vad hade du för telefonnummer?* (‘what is your phone number?’), *ja behöver ditt telefonnummer* (‘I need your phone number’).

As the examples above show, T address (*du*) is used by both customers and staff, in both countries.

5.2 No address

The second most frequent pattern is to use no direct address in the interaction. This pattern can be found throughout the data, but it is more common among the customers. Examples (5) and (6) show two cases where neither the customer nor the staff use any address pronouns.

(5) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), female customer (33 years)

01 S: hej
    ‘hi’
02 C: hej ikväll Fanny och och(.) [Alexander] tack
    ‘hi tonight Fanny and and Alexander please’
03 S: [mm ] hur många
    ‘mm how many’
04 C: eh: två stycken
    ‘eh two’

(6) Cultural venue, Finland: female staff (29 years), female customer (40 years)

01 S: hej
    ‘hi’
02 (0.3)
In research on address, using no address has often been regarded as an avoidance strategy (see, for example, Yli-Vakkuri, 2005). Avoidance is, however, not the main issue in all cases where there is no address. When the customer in example (5) requests tickets for a play by saying *ikväll Fanny och Alexander* tack (‘tonight Fanny and Alexander please’, line 2), the focus is on the object of the transaction rather than the interlocutors. Similarly, when the customer in example (6) initiates the transaction with *jag undrar bara om det finns kvar* biljetter... (‘I just wonder if there are any tickets left...’, line 7), this can be regarded as a conventional way of making a request in a service encounter where the focus is on the object (the tickets).

The staff member’s use of *hur många?* (‘how many’) in line 3 in example (5) from Sweden can also be interpreted as an efficient expression since it leaves out self-evident information. However, in example (6) from Finland, the expressions *hur kan jag hjälpa* (‘how can I help’, line 5) and *hur många får det vara?* (‘how many may it be’, line 9) are somewhat different. Both expressions are routinized ways of initiating transactions or asking for further details common before the *du*-reform (see section 2.1; Fremer, Chapter 3 of this volume). In our data, such phrases are more frequent in the Finland-Swedish service encounters but occur, to some extent, also in the Sweden-Swedish dataset (see example (9)).

### 5.3 Plural *ni*

Plural *ni* occurs in the data from both Sweden and Finland. It is not a particularly frequent pattern, but there are some contexts where it...
is recurrent. Customers often use plural *ni* to refer collectively to staff members as representative of the theatre or ticket venue. Staff, on the other hand, sometimes use plural *ni* to address customers who buy tickets not only for themselves but for several people. Both of these collective uses (see Tykesson-Bergman, 2006, p. 63) can be found in example (7) from Sweden.

(7) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), female customer (60 years)

01 C: hej [jag] skulle vilja beställ- eller köpa biljetter till KIDS
‘hi I would like to rese- or buy tickets for KIDS’

02 S: [hej]
‘hi’

03 S: ja
‘yes’

04 C: har *ni* nånting den nu ska vi se var jag hade sett de (.)
‘do you.pl have anything on the, now let’s see where I have seen it (.’)

05 lördagen den sextonde i elfte
‘Saturday the sixteenth of November’

06 S: jag kollar
‘let me check’

07 C: mm

08 (3.o)

09 S: hur många ska *ni* ha i så fall
‘how many do you.pl want in that case’

10 C: vad sex stycken
‘sorry six’

11 S: nej jag har inga där tyvärr alls
‘no, I have none at all, unfortunately’

12 C: det har *du* inte
‘oh, you.t don’t’

In example (7), the customer initiates the transaction with a request for several tickets (*biljett-er*, ‘ticket-s’, line 1). This establishes that a group of people are going to attend the show, which explains the fact that the staff uses plural *ni* in line 9. In line 4, the customer uses plural *ni* to address the staff as a representative of the establishment: *har ni nånting...* (‘do you have anything...’). This can be compared to collective use of *vi* (‘we’) by staff in service encounters to refer to the establishment (compare phrases like *Vi har öppet på söndagar*, ‘We are open Sundays’). However, in this particular instance, the staff chooses to use the singular *jag* (‘I’) instead (line 11) to which the customer responds reciprocally with *T* address (line 12).
The practice of using plural *ni* to refer to a group of people – represented by a single customer – becomes particularly clear in example (8) from Finland. In this example the staff member at a theatre uses both T address (*du*) and plural *ni* in the same turn. The customer she is talking to is ordering beverages for the interval.

(8) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (58 years), male customer (77 years)

01 S: *å hur många personer e ni*  
‘and how many persons are you.pl’

02 C: fyra  
‘four’

03 (0.7)

04 S: *å och har du varit å tittat på vår hemsida vad ni vill ha*  
‘and have you.t looked at our website, what you.pl want’

05 C: eh (0.7) nej (jo men) (0.5) kaffe  
‘eh, no, yes but coffee’

06 (1.0)

07 S: fyra kaffe  
‘four coffees’

In line 1 in example (8), the staff member uses plural *ni* when she asks the customer *å hur många personer e ni* (‘and how many persons are you’). Given the referential meaning of the utterance it would be nonsensical to argue that *ni* is a case of polite V address here. When the customer has provided the information (line 2: *fyra*, ‘four’), the staff asks what beverages the customer wants to order. This question (line 4) includes both T address (*du*), *har du varit å tittat på vår hemsida* (‘have you looked at our website’) referring to the person ordering the beverages, and plural *ni*, *vad ni vill ha* (‘what you want’) referring to the four people who will be attending the event.

As these examples show, plural *ni* is a resource in the service encounters. By referring to a group of people, or to the establishment, with *ni* the speaker achieves a neutral and unmarked stance. In the final section of the qualitative analysis, we turn to cases where *ni* is clearly used as a polite form of address to one person.

### 5.4 V address (*ni*)

As pointed out in section 4, only the staff members use non-ambiguous V address (*ni*). Almost all examples occur in service encounters from Finland with younger staff members. In the data from Sweden, V address
is extremely rare, with only one non-ambiguous occurrence (example (9)). The staff member is a 27-year-old male attending to a 42-year-old customer.

(9) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), male customer (42 years)

01 C: hej (1.2) eh jag ska hämta biljetter till en föreställning på  
‘hi, eh, I am here to pick up tickets to a play on’

02 S: lördan (–) miljö: [mm]  
‘Saturday (inaudible) environment’

03 [mm] i vilket namn  
‘in what name’

04 C: First name Last name  
(24.5) ((staff works on the computer))

05 S: mt är ni säker på att det var i det namnet  
‘are you. v sure that it’s in that name’

06 C: mt (o.8) ja+a  
‘yes’

07 S: du (ha-) (0.3) du har svarat ja tack (o.8) [i ] god tid  
‘you.sg ha- you.sg have confirmed in time?’

08 C: [ja] ja+a  
‘yes, yes’

09 S: det skulle inte hämtas tidigare eller så  
‘it was not supposed to be picked up earlier or?’

10 C: nä en halvtimme innan föreställning sa hon (.) så att  
‘no, half an hour before the play she said, so’

The customer in example (9) is picking up tickets for a play. The staff requests the name in which the booking was made (line 3), but then has difficulties finding the tickets. When he checks the name of the customer again, in line 6, he uses V address: är ni säker på att det är i det namnet? (‘are you sure that it’s in that name?’). Here the interpretation cannot be a case of plural ni: the adjective säker (‘sure’) refers to one person (the plural form is säkra). It can also be noted that the staff member uses constructions without address (lines 3, 10) which also have a distancing effect. However, in line 8, directly after having used V address, the staff switches to T address: du har svarat ja tack i god tid (‘you’ve confirmed in time?’). There is no apparent reason for this shift from V to T at this point (i.e., there is no change in the situation or in the participant roles).

In the Finland-Swedish data there are several service encounters with unambiguous V address only (see Figure 4.2). However, variation between T and V address also occurs among staff in the service
encounters from Finland. In particular this is the case among young staff who show the highest proportion of V address in the data. In example (10), the 25-year-old female staff uses both V and T address to a middle-aged customer (47).

(10) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (25 years), female customer (47 years)

01 S: [hej]
   ‘hi’
02 C: [hej]
   ‘hi’
03 (1.3)
04 ((customer is eating an ice cream))
05 C: First name (0.9) Last name (0.5)
06 jag har en biljett på tredje rad[en]
   ‘I have a ticket on the third row’
07 S: [ju ]st det det var <ni som ringde>
   ‘right it was you.v who phoned’
08 (0.5) vi ska se (0.3) där
   ‘let’s see there’
09 (2.1)
10 S: à det var personalbilje[tt ]:
   ‘and it was a staff´s ticket’
11 C: [jà+å]
   ‘yes’
12 ((10 lines omitted))
13 ((the customer pays for the ticket by credit card))
14 S: mt (0.4) så där var så goda (.)
   ‘here it is be so good.PL’
15 vill du ha kvitto
   ‘do you.T want the receipt’

As in example (9), the customer is picking up tickets. When she has identified herself, the staff member confirms this by saying just det det var ni som ringde (‘right it was you who phoned’, line 7) using V address. Later on when she hands over the tickets, she uses the morphologically plural form var så goda (‘here you are’, literally ‘be so good.PL’), even though the customer is alone and buys only one ticket. In the very next turn, however, the staff adopts T address when asking if the customer needs the receipt: vill du ha kvitto (‘do you want the receipt’).

In both examples (9) and (10), the change from V to T address is quite sudden. It occurs without anything having changed in the relationship.
or in the interaction. In example (11) from Finland, however, we have a clear case of a contextual change. In this example, the 29-year-old staff first uses T address with the 89-year-old customer, but later changes to V address. The example is not from a theatre box office but from a venue with a broader type of service. The customer is casting his vote for his candidate in a contest organized by a charity organization.

(11) Cultural venue, Finland: female staff (29), male customer (89)

01 S: jag kan hjälpa fast om du tar å viker
   ‘I can help but if you.T fold’

02 C: ja det f- kanske bäst att du gör det
   ‘well, maybe it is better if you.T do it’

03 (o.8)

04 S: å sådär (.) å ifall ni ville bidra med nån summa
   ‘okay (.) and in case you.V wanted to contribute with an amount’

05 så då ska man sätta det hit också
   ‘one can put it there as well’

06 C: ska ja- ska jag sätta slanten också dit
   ‘shall I- shall I put the money there too’

In lines 1 and 2, the staff is helping the customer to fold his ballot ticket. Both use T address: *om du tar å viker* (‘if you fold’.T, staff), *bäst att du gör det* (‘better if you.T do it’, customer). After a brief pause, the staff switches to V address when she brings up the question of contributing a small sum of money to the charity: *ifall ni ville bidra med nån summa så då ska man sätta det hit* (‘in case you.V wanted to contribute with an amount one can put it there as well’, line 4–5). Asking for a money contribution is a potentially sensitive topic requiring a greater level of politeness, which could be the reason for the switch from T to V address.

The examples show that V address is used to a limited extent in Swedish: with one exception, all cases are found in the Finland–Swedish data. When V address is used it often co-occurs with T in the same interaction, which shows the optional character of V address in Swedish. The intra-individual variation in examples (9), (10) and (11) illustrates the complexity of V address in our data.

6 Discussion and conclusion

Previous research based on reported address practices in Sweden and Finland suggests that the T form – *du* – is the default form of address
in Swedish, with particularly pervasive use in Sweden (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). Our study of actual address in service encounters confirms *du* as the overall most common form of address. However, some interesting variation can be found. With regard to customers, the greatest discrepancy in address choice is not to be found between the two national varieties of Swedish but between younger and older customers in Sweden. While older customers are clearly ‘*du*-users’ with T address in close to 90 per cent of the interactions, the younger ones use direct address – T and in some cases plural *ni* (but not *V*) – to a fairly limited extent (below 50 per cent). This could be interpreted in light of the overall societal shift towards universal *du* in the late 1960s. Older customers in Sweden are more likely to actively use direct T address than customers younger than 50, who have not experienced the implementation of the *du*-reform. A similar age difference can be found also in the Finland-Swedish dataset, but among staff, where younger staff use T address much less than the older ones (approximately 30 per cent as opposed to about 65 per cent).

Much debate since the mid-1980s has focused on the controversial re-entry of V address – *ni* – in the function as a polite address pronoun in Sweden (see section 2.1). However, our results demonstrate limited use of V address. Primarily, V address is used by younger Finland-Swedish staff members. In contrast, in the entire Sweden-Swedish data there is only a single unambiguous occurrence of V address (example (9)). The ambivalence in the use of T and V in some of the qualitative examples indicates that V address is indeed a thin social veneer, which is quickly discarded (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 112). The almost complete lack of V address in the Sweden-Swedish data contrasts sharply with the view that ‘the new *ni*’ has been reintroduced in the service sector as a polite form of address. Of course this does not mean that staff in our data are not polite to customers. Politeness is simply expressed by other means and can sometimes be communicated by using plural *ni* or by not making use of direct address at all. In our data, it is fairly common to use no address form at all, especially among the younger customers in Sweden. However, as shown in the qualitative analysis, no address cannot automatically be interpreted as an avoidance strategy. Instead, it is a way of focusing on the object of the transaction. Even though expressions without direct address (e.g., *Kan jag hjälpa till*, ‘Can I help’) may well originate in an avoidance strategy, through frequent use they have become lexicalized and are simply used as formulaic expressions.
In Finland, the address behaviour of the staff confirms results based on other data (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, on reported address; Norrby, Wide, Lindström and Nilsson, 2015, on medical consultations). The Finland-Swedish staff, especially the younger group, use fewer T forms (du) and more V forms (ni), which can be interpreted as an orientation towards negative politeness, with more indirect and formal expression for maintaining interpersonal relationships (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In contrast, the older customers in Sweden, who have the highest level of T address, confirm the tendency of more positive politeness strategies (i.e., use of more direct and informal patterns) in Sweden Swedish. Moreover, the different politeness orientations evident in these service encounters can be related to the overall societal conditions in the respective countries. Previous research has found Finns to be more reserved than Swedes (Laine-Sveiby, 1991; Saari, 1995; Charles and Louhiala-Salminen, 2007). This, in turn, can be related to research demonstrating that Swedish society leans more towards informality and intimacy whereas Finnish society is characterized by higher levels of formality and distance (Petterson and Nurmela, 2007). However, we have also found some complicating tendencies in our data that cannot be interpreted as a result of different societal orientations alone. As mentioned earlier, the greatest difference in addressing behaviour is found between younger and older customers in Sweden, not across national varieties. Furthermore, the results show that younger customers in Sweden have the largest proportion of no address, followed by younger staff in Finland. The findings show that factors such as age and participant roles, as well as the situational and interactional context, are important for understanding more fully how address is used for managing interpersonal relationships.

Notes

1 This research is supported financially by Riksbankens jubileumsfond (grant no. M12-0137:1).
2 Through the use of video recordings it is possible to establish, for example, the number of participants in the service encounter; a fact which is important when studying address.
3 Since our data consist of naturally occurring interactions, it was not possible to control the age distribution. All who agreed to participate filled out a
consent form and provided background information (e.g., age, gender, regional background).

4 The reasons for the age imbalance in the data are most likely that the institutions in question predominantly cater for an older audience, and that younger people prefer to buy their tickets online.

5 All examples include the following contextual information: type of venue, country, staff and customer’s age and gender. Features discussed are marked in bold. For transcription symbols, see p. 95.

6 For similar use of the second-person plural *Ihr* in German, see Kretzenbacher and Schüpbach, Chapter 2 of this volume.

References


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finlandssvensk syntax. Skriftspråk, samtal och dialekter Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, pp. 11–43.


Transcription symbols

[ point when overlapping talk begins
] point when overlapping talk stops
wo+ord legato pronunciation
wo:rd lengthening of the sound
<word> produced with slower pace
(word) uncertain transcription
((word)) meta comment
(-) talk not discernible
wo- audible cut-off
mt click (for example from smacking one’s lips)
(.) micro pause (less than 0.2 seconds)
(0.5) silence measured in tenths of a second
First Names in Starbucks: A Clash of Cultures?

Johanna Isosävi and Hanna Lappalainen

Abstract: The authors focus on a particular instance of the global meeting the local: American multinational corporations that seek to transfer informal American styles of interaction to their branches in other countries. They explore how the address practices of the American coffee chain Starbucks have been exported and received in its cafés in Finland and France, two contrasting contexts that provide a rich source of comparison. Through their analysis of Internet comments, actual café interactions, and interviews with baristas and customers in both countries, the authors reveal the social meanings and language ideologies related to the use of first names, and the complexities of transferring external norms of interaction into new local settings.

Keywords: Finnish; French; globalization; first names; social meanings; language ideologies

1 Introduction

We live in a globalizing world, understood here at its simplest as the accelerating movement of capital, people, images, goods and discourses around the globe. Globalization is a complex phenomenon, with economic, political and cultural dimensions. It has been defined, theorized and discussed in a variety of often conflicting ways (see, for example, Coupland, 2010). In this chapter, rather than a homogenizing force that simply projects Western and particularly American culture, and English, across the world, we view globalization as a dynamic process in which the global and the local interact (Cameron, 2003; Meyerhoff and Niedzielski, 2003; Coupland, 2010; Turner, 2010, pp. 6–10; Sifianou, 2013). An example is the Swedish multinational furniture company IKEA which promotes the transfer of informal Swedish address styles (an equivalent in French would be informal pronoun tu ['you'] instead of formal vous, and in German du instead of Sie) in customer interactions in European countries. In some countries, the local norm based on the formal address pronoun has prevailed (Norrby and Hajek, 2011; for other examples, see Cameron, 2000, 2003, 2011; Heller, 2010; Sifianou, 2013).

This chapter focuses on a particular instance of the global meeting the local: American multinational corporations in the service industry that seek to transfer American styles of interaction to their branches or franchises in other countries. American culture has been characterized as informal, with the emphasis on individualism and equality (for example, Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2009, p. 288). Increasing informality in the United States is linked with the erosion of the distinction between private and public (Lakoff, 2005, cited in Sifianou, 2013, p. 89). According to Cameron (2011, p. 206), the global service industry has also contributed to an increase in informal address forms (for changing politeness norms, see also Larjavaara, 1999, pp. 9–10). In American service encounters, informality typically translates as the use of first names and conventionalized expressions such as ‘Have a nice day!’

The overall aim of this chapter is to explore how the address practices of the American multinational coffee chain Starbucks have been exported and received in its cafés in Finland and France. When Starbucks opened its first coffee house in Finland in May 2012, the Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat found the event newsworthy enough to publish an article (Helsingin Sanomat, 2012). It mentioned that the style of service
at Starbucks felt ‘American’, and the waiters addressed customers by their first name. The departure point for this study was the Internet discussion that followed the article. As a country of comparison, France was chosen: Starbucks has been operating there since 2004, which means that the company is in theory more embedded into French society. We are interested in analysing if the longer history of Starbucks in France has influenced the social meanings given to the use of first names. French address norms also differ from Finnish norms, which provides a potentially rich source of comparison.

The chapter will answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of social meanings are given in Finland and in France to the usage of first names in service encounters? What are the indexical meanings as well as language ideologies related to these meanings (Blommaert, 2003; Silverstein, 2003; Agha, 2007; Eckert, 2008; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008)?
2. Do the meanings given to the use of first names differ in Finland and in France?

In order to answer these questions, we will examine a range of data types – comments from the press and the general public via the Internet, ethnographic observations of café interactions, and interviews with both servers and customers.

2 Address practices in Finnish and in French

Norms of address are complicated both in modern Finnish (Peterson, 2010; Havu, Isosävi and Lappalainen, 2014; Lappalainen, 2015), and in French (for example, Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992, p. 48). In Finnish and in French, the address pronoun system consists of two forms: sinä/tu (less formal, T) and te/vous (more formal, V). However, Finnish and French use these pronouns differently. Social distance and hierarchy seem to play a more important role in the selection of a suitable form of address in French than in Finnish. The use of the T form in French among adults is restricted to close relationships, situations where speakers share common ground, and in certain institutional or workplace settings (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). The V form is a standard pronoun of address in many contexts, including service encounters (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992; Isosävi, 2010). According to Clyne, Norrby
and Warren (2009, p. 159), some speakers of French nonetheless have personal preferences, and characterize themselves as being more T or more V users.

Unlike the French system, the Finnish system of address changed radically at the end of the 1960s due to changes towards a more egalitarian society, and T forms replaced V forms in many contexts, such as in service encounters. (For a similar development in Swedish, see Fremer’s Chapter 3 in this volume.) Although we can see a comeback of the more formal V forms from the 1990s, informal forms are still widely favoured in Finnish (Yli-Vakkuri, 2005, pp. 190–4).

With regard to first names, they are more widely used in French, but in both languages their use is not typical in service encounters. In French, formal forms of address such as Monsieur/Madame are used in service encounters (Isosävi, 2010, pp. 84–5); in Finnish, the use of first names is generally avoided, even in multi-party conversations (Seppänen, 1989, pp. 213–8; Yli-Vakkuri, 2005, p. 194; Hakulinen et al., 2004, §1077). In Finnish, only telemarketing companies are known for repeating the name of their potential client. According to an extensive survey (N = 1517 respondents) by Korhonen and Lappalainen (2013), 78.9 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement ‘I think it is irritating when the telemarketing companies address their clients by their first name.’ The older the respondent, the more negative his or her attitude. In addition, in the optional comments by respondents, the use of a first name was considered to be too intimate, and an American (as opposed to a Finnish) practice.

Unlike in Finnish where first names can only be used with T forms, they can be accompanied both by T and V forms in French in certain circumstances. The use of first names together with V pronouns in French has been seen as an outcome of contact with American culture (Guigo, 1991, p. 50). This address practice provides a solution for French people in situations when they feel that no other form of address is suitable; that is, when Monsieur or Madame + V pronoun is too solemn and formal and first name + T pronoun is too intimate. V + first name can be used primarily in long-term service encounters, such as encounters between a lawyer and client. The use of first name + V is generally more common in other situations than service encounters in French, such as between colleagues at work, between friends of friends, and between parents-in-law and sons-/daughters-in-law (Isosävi, 2010, pp. 72–8).
3 Data, methodology and theoretical background

3.1 Data

Our corpus consists of three types of data collected in Finland and France relating to service encounters in Starbucks cafés: Internet discussions, field notes of authentic service situations, and interviews of both baristas (as Starbucks calls its waiters) and clients. The data were collected between May 2012 and November 2013.

Our primary data source consists of Internet discussions (see Table 5.1). We have encouraged discussion in three different ways. Firstly, Lappalainen wrote a blog post in Finnish concerning the use of first names in Starbucks (2012). Secondly, we linked the newspaper article to our Facebook (FB) profiles and asked our Finnish-speaking friends to comment on it (2012). Thirdly, we asked our students to comment on the original newspaper article on an e-learning platform at the University of Helsinki in 2013.

The primary source of the French Internet data is the French Blog de la méchante by Éléonore Bridge (2008) and her post where she comments on the use of first names in Starbucks. We have also analysed a post on the same subject written by the French blogger Thomas Clément (2006), as well as a Facebook discussion initiated by a French colleague. Our final source is a short video Donnez-nous votre prénom (‘Give us your first name’) on the Starbucks France Facebook site (2012), which stimulated various comments. The French Internet dataset is smaller than the Finnish, but at the time of the study, the topic was more current in Finland as the first café opened in 2012.

The second set of data is based on our ethnographic fieldwork during visits to the only two Starbucks cafés in Finland (at Helsinki airport, two visits, and in the city of Helsinki, one visit) and four cafés in France.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of comments</th>
<th>Finnish data</th>
<th>French data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comments on the online newspaper article</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ comments on the newspaper article</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on blog posts</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on Facebook (friends/friends of friends)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on the French Starbucks’ Facebook site</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Johanna Isosävi and Hanna Lappalainen

3.2 Theoretical background

Our study is based on the theoretical concepts of social or indexical meaning, enregisterment and language ideology (for example, see Kroskrity, 2004; Agha, 2007; Eckert, 2008). We argue that linguistic forms and practices receive their meaning from their use, as part of a context. However, if only the language use itself is analysed, we cannot be certain how an interlocutor has interpreted an utterance, for example whether they have evaluated it as polite or impolite. One means of resolving this problem is to analyse language attitudes by examining the metalinguistic comments made by language users, which is a practice we have adopted in our study. In this chapter, the written comments in the media data are analysed by applying semantic and pragmatic approaches, focusing not only on the content, but also on the linguistic features of formulations. As for the field notes, a close analysis of the linguistic formulations has not always been possible because of the fragmentary nature of these data (see Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain, 2009, pp. 196–201; see also Laihonen, 2008; Milani, 2010).

In this chapter, our first objective is to identify the social meanings that are attributed to the usage of first names, and the type of indexical field these meanings constitute. Our second objective is to investigate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Finnish data</th>
<th>French data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations: taking the order (first queue)*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations: giving the coffee (second queue)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with customers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews with baristas</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The coffees are ordered in the first queue and given out in the second queue.

(randomly selected in Paris; one visit to each) (see Table 5.2). These data consist of field notes of authentic service encounters, such as how the baristas request first names and use them, and interviews of both baristas and clients, soliciting their opinions on the use of first names. All the observed encounters and interviewees were randomly selected in busy cafés.
whether the meanings given to the use of first names differ in Finland and in France. Our study demonstrates that the use of first names has been associated with certain groups (such as telemarketers) or nationalities (Americans); this will be referred to as the 1st order index. Users have given meanings to this index, such as friendliness and intrusiveness, according to the contexts in which it is being used. The interpretations of these meanings – referred to as the 2nd order indexes – might not be shared by all the members of the community, but they are widely recognized (Silverstein, 2003; Johnstone and Kiesling, 2008; Eckert, 2008, 2012).

We are interested not only in meanings, but also in the processes that develop and change meanings, which are not fixed entities but indexically mutable. This process is referred to here as enregisterment. According to Agha (2007), enregisterment is an ideological process: when a certain linguistic phenomenon (or a set of phenomena) is repeatedly used in certain contexts, it becomes salient and begins to carry social meanings. These meanings are mediated by different types of metadiscourses. For this reason, it is important to study the attitudes that language users have towards the use of these phenomena, and to examine the types of metalinguistic comments they relate to the phenomena in question.

Finally, social meanings cannot be interpreted as disconnected from language ideologies (see, for example, Blommaert, 2003; Eckert, 2008, pp. 456–7). The semantics of language ideology and language attitudes are closely related, but ideologies can be considered to be a wider phenomenon than attitudes. For instance, Silverstein (1979, p. 193) defines linguistic ideologies as ‘sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use’. These beliefs and feelings are multiple and context-bound, and are constructed from the speaker’s sociocultural experiences. Due to their multiplicity, several ideologies often prevail simultaneously within a community, which can cause tensions between the ideologies. This also occurs in our data, where various beliefs are present at the same time. The beliefs observed in the media data and interviews can be referred to as ideologies of purism, instrumentalism or pluralism (Schieffelin, Woolard and Krosktrity, 1998; Woolard, 1998; Wingstedt, 1998; Krosktrity, 2004; Spitzmüller, 2007; Mäntynen, Halonen, Pietikäinen and Solin, 2012).
4 Usage of first names and their social meanings

As already mentioned, the starting point of this study was a newspaper article on the launching of the first Starbucks café in Finland, published in the leading Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (2012). The text mentions and comments on the use of first names:

(1) *Helsingin Sanomat*, 15 May 2012


'At first glance, the cafeteria seems ordinary. The showcase is full of muffins, croissants and sandwiches. However, the service feels American. The waiters address customers by their first name that has been asked for when they placed their order.'

In the text, the use of first names is explicitly considered to be American. The journalist finds the usage of first names to be marked in the Finnish context, and it is contrasted (kuitenkin ‘however’) with the selection of pastries, which are described as ‘ordinary’ – in other words, unmarked, typically Finnish.

In the French media corpus, we analysed a discussion that began with the post ‘Je déteste starbucks’ (‘I hate Starbucks’) in Éléonore Bridge’s blog of 28 January 2008.

(2) Éléonore Bridge’s blog, 28 January 2008

... quand le serveur me demande mon prénom ça m’agace direct, ça pue le marketing à plein nez, genre ‘c’est bon, on est cool on est ton pote on t’appelle par ton prénom.’... Je dis un prénom de merde pour faire ma râleuse et je monte déguster mon cheesecake à l’étage.³

‘... when the waiter asks for my first name, it annoys me straight off, it reeks of in-your-face marketing, it’s like saying “it’s okay, we’re cool, we’re your mates, we use your first name.” ... I give a crap name to show my irritation and I go upstairs to eat my cheesecake.’

The blogger’s attitude toward the use of first names is clearly critical: ça m’agace direct, ça pue le marketing à plein nez (‘it annoys me straight off, it reeks of in-your-face marketing’). She received 94 comments,⁴ 19 of which dealt with the use of first names in Starbucks. The use of first names had been abandoned at Starbucks in France in 2008 (Sens
du client, 2008), but then subsequently reintroduced. A news article in *Le Huffington Post* (2008) gives six reasons for problems of Starbucks in France, one of them being a cultural problem relating to first names. To promote the reintroduction of first names, Starbucks France launched a video on its Facebook site in 2012 with the title *Donnez-nous votre prénom* (‘Give us your first name’). The company asks viewers for comments: ‘Tout semble un peu plus impersonnel aujourd’hui’ c’est ce que nous avons constaté. Et vous, qu’en pensez-vous?’ (‘Everything seems to be a little more impersonal these days, that’s what we have noticed. What about you, what do you think?’).

Our ethnographic observations both in Helsinki and in Paris confirm that a customer’s name is indeed asked for when placing an order: *Millä nimellä laitetaan?* (‘Under which name shall we place the order?’) / *Votre prénom?* (‘Your first name?’). The difference is that in France the first name is explicitly requested, whereas in Finnish, the general word *name* is used most often. In the French context, the more formal forms of address such as *Monsieur* and *Madame* typical of opening and leaving greetings in service encounters continue to be used alongside first names by the Starbucks barista: *Bonjour, Monsieur* (‘Good morning, Sir’) or by *Au revoir, Madame* (‘Goodbye, Madam’).

When the coffees were given to the customer in the second queue (by another barista than the one taking the orders in the first queue), with only one exception the first names of customers were used in Finnish, as example (3) shows:

(3) 19 May 2012, Helsinki Airport Starbucks (B = Barista, C = Customer)

B: Juha-Pekka!
B: Oliks Juha-Pekka?
C: Täällä.
B: Capuccino.
C: Joo kiitos.
‘B: Juha-Pekka! [a Finnish first name]
B: Is there a Juha-Pekka here?
C: Here.
B: Capuccino.
C: Yeah, thank you.’
When analysing the Finnish media comments on the use of first names, we notice a difference in attitudes that corresponds to whether or not the respondent has ever been to a Starbucks. Those who have never been to the coffee chain express predominantly negative attitudes. The interviews conducted in cafés, on the other hand, consist of mainly positive attitudes towards the use of first names in both countries. In most cases, the fact that the commentator has not been to Starbucks is expressed implicitly, for example, "Luulen, että itselleni tulisi epämukava olo etunimittelystä kahvilassa ('I think I would feel uncomfortable if I was addressed by my first name in a cafeteria'). It is explicitly mentioned in only eight of 48 Finnish comments. In the French media data, only one person mentions that he has not been to Starbucks in Paris (but he has been to cafés in the US and Canada); in other words, negative attitudes are expressed by those who have visited a Starbucks. Next, we will analyse the negative comments, as they constitute over two-thirds of all the comments in the Finnish media discussions, and half of the comments in the French media data.

4.1 Negative attitudes

The difference between the negative attitudes expressed in the Finnish and French data lies, first, in the intensity of the expressions used. Typical adjectives in the data include, for example, *outo* / *étrange* ('strange'), *hämmentävä* ('confusing'), *ärsyttävä* ('irritating'), *kamala* ('horrible') and typical verbs, for example, *ärsyttää* / *énerver* ('irritate'), *vierastaa* ('consider odd'). In Finnish, irritation is also described in extreme terms of strong physical expressions, such as *selkäpiitä, karmii* ('spine-chilling') *veren-paine, nousee* ('blood pressure rises') that are not found in the French data. In addition, there is a larger variety of negative expressions in the Finnish data than in the French data. Especially in Finnish, attitudes are often strengthened by using extreme expressions, such as *aina/toujours* ('always') and *koskaan* ('never') (compare, for instance, Pomeranz, 1986; Shore, 2009).

4.1.1 Strange and intimate: not part of our culture

Both datasets contain negative attitudes that are justified with the argument that requesting a name is not part of Finnish or French culture. Instead, it is associated with American culture. It is important to note that it is not surprising that the word *Americanism* is repeatedly used in the Finnish data because it is explicitly mentioned both in the newspaper article and in the blog.
Comment, Hanna Lappalainen's blog, 16 May 2012
Nimen viljeleminen joka välissä on amerikkalainen tapa ja suomalaisille taatusti vain ärsyttävää.
‘Repeating a name all the time is an American habit and it is surely only irritating for Finns.’

Éléonore Bridge's comment, 22 September 2009
Disons qu’en France les serveurs vous demandent votre prénom avec telle-ment peu de conviction que ce n’est pas naturel. Essayer a tout prix de copier coller un concept dans d’autres pays qui ont une culture différente je ne comprends pas. Ça doit très bien passer ailleurs, si j’allais chez starbucks aux US ça ne me dérangerait pas. Ce sont les starbucks en France que je deteste.
‘In France, the waiters ask for your first name with so little conviction that it’s not natural. Trying to copy a concept in other countries that have a different culture, I don't understand it. It must work fine elsewhere, if I went to Starbucks in the US, it wouldn't bother me. It’s the Starbucks in France that I hate.’

In the Finnish data, requesting a first name is also rejected, with references to the typically Finnish desire to maintain distance and to remain anonymous in service encounters (example (6)).

Facebook, 15 May 2012
Ärsyttää. Jumankauta mä haluan vetää kahvini ihan anonyymisti!
‘Irritating. Damn, I wanna have my coffee anonymously!’

According to several comments, especially in the Finnish data, requesting first names is too intimate, a kind of intrusion of people's privacy. Use of first names is also compared to physical closeness (example (7)), contrasted with the use of V forms (example (8), Finnish) or associated with T forms (example (9), French).

Facebook, 17 May 2012
Siitä [nimen kysymisestä] tulee samanlainen tunne kuin keskieurooppalaisten kanssa, kun suhtouto ihminen tunkee keskustelutilanteessa fyysisesti liian lähelle tai koskettelee.
‘It [asking for a first name] gives me a similar feeling that I have experienced with Central Europeans: a person who I don't know well intrudes on my personal space or touches me.’

Student's comment, e-learning platform, 6 February 2013
Jonkinlaisena vastakohtana teititellylle voi sitten pitää Starbucks-käytäntöä, jossa vieraan ihmisen oma tila viedään utelemalla hänen nimeään ja kutsumalla nimeltä.
'The practice adopted in Starbucks can be considered as somehow being in contrast to the use of V, where a stranger’s personal space is invaded by being asked inquisitively for his or her name and by being called by that name.'

(9) Interview, Paris, woman, late 30s, 17 December 2012 (C = customer, I = interviewer)
C: Ça me gène.
I: Pourquoi?
C: C’est une relation personnelle qui me gène, une personne qui ne me connait pas. Parce que finalement ça veut dire un tu derrière.

‘C: It bothers me.
I: Why?
C: It is a personal relationship that bothers me, a person who does not know me. Because in the end, there is an underlying tu.’

Example (9) corresponds to an anecdote on the site Viedemerde.fr (2013). When one Starbucks barista requested, as usual, the client’s first name, the reply was as follows:

(10) Viedemerde.fr (2013), 17 May 2013
Désolé, je comprends que tu sois désespérée... En plus, j’ai déjà une copine...
‘I’m sorry, I understand that you are desperate... Besides, I already have a girlfriend...’

To conclude, both in the Finnish and French data, but especially in the Finnish data, the lack of familiarity between the interlocutors seems to be a reason for not accepting first name use at Starbucks.

4.1.2 Commercialism: marketing

One difference between the negative attitudes in the Finnish and the French data is the concept of marketing, which was explicitly mentioned in Éléonore Bridge’s blog post. The French frequently associate the use of first name with this concept; the Finns only when comparing Starbucks’ practice to telemarketing. However, among the French comments, different interpretations can be found: some give marketing a very negative meaning (see example (2)), while others are not so bothered about it (example (11)):

(11) Comment, Éléonore Bridge’s blog, 2 October 2008
Ok, c’est [= les prénoms] surement marketing... mais bon, c’est pas ce qui gene le plus...si?
'OK, it's [= first names] definitely marketing... but it's not the thing that disturbs the most, is it?'

As coffees are ordered and delivered in different queues at Starbucks, the contact between customer and staff is depersonalized; in fact, it is not the same barista who takes the order and delivers the coffee. The use of first names can be seen as a means of compensating for the impersonality of the service routine, and thus as a part of marketing routines. Fairclough (1989) has described this phenomenon as synthetic personalization (see also Cameron, 2011, p. 201).

4.2 Positive attitudes

Positive attitudes are found in both the Finnish and French data. In the Finnish data, the positive comments are made by those who have visited a Starbucks café themselves (mostly abroad), and the comments are justified with personal experiences (see also example (12)). In both the Finnish and French interviews, the attitudes expressed are mostly positive, with only a few exceptions (see example (9)).

However, it is important to note that the discussions in our data started with Starbucks’ address practices being implicitly or explicitly questioned (see example (1): Finnish newspaper article; example (2): French blog post). Discussants supporting the use of first names therefore had to defend Starbucks, which might have had an impact on the data.

4.2.1 Functionality

Both in the Finnish and the French data (social media and interview data), one typical argument to support the use of first names is practicality. The Finnish commentators in particular consider themselves to be ‘Starbucks experts’, who are able to teach less informed interlocutors how the orders are to be placed and why the name of the client is being requested. In general, the supporters of functionality seem to want to refute the misconceptions of opponents by explaining that first names are used for the customers’ own benefit to ensure that they receive the correct coffee orders, given that different baristas in different queues take their orders and hand out the coffees (examples (12) and (13)).

(12) Comment, Hanna Lappalainen’s blog, 17 May 2012
Muutama päivä sitten Berliinissä Starbucksissa piipahtaessani asiakkaan etunimi kirjoitettiin keltaiseen tarrassappuun, joka

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Johanna Isosävi and Hanna Lappalainen

When I visited a Starbucks in Berlin a few days ago, they wrote the name of the customer on a yellow paper that was stuck to the cup when the drink was ready. In that way, everyone found their own coffee easily and fortunately, they didn't shout the customer's name all over the café.

(13) Comment, Éléonore Bridge's blog, 2 October 2008
Les prénoms? C'est pratique. Quand tu as 10 personnes qui attendent de récupérer leurs boissons et qui ne savent même plus ce qu’ils ont commandé, ça sert.

‘First names? It’s practical. When you have ten people waiting to get their coffees and they don’t even remember what they have ordered, it’s useful.’

At Starbucks, the names of the different coffees are complicated, and the customers may not always remember what they have ordered. However, as Cameron (2011, p. 206) notes, the use of scripted routines leads to a routinization in customer behaviour. For instance, a frequent customer at Starbucks can be capable of fluently producing a long and complicated name of a coffee. The same type of socialization is also evident in the usage of first names. The Finnish baristas we interviewed pointed out that when the chain had been operating for more than a year in Finland, some customers had begun to give their first name automatically.

4.2.2 Personal service

In addition to functionality, our social media and interview data demonstrate that the use of first names is often associated with personal service both in Finnish and in French (examples (14) and (15)).

(14) Interview, Paris, barista, 18 December 2012
C'est personnalisé. Les gens sont pressés le matin, c'est une touche de familiarité. Ils sont stressés et pressés, c'est amical.

‘It is personal. The customers are busy in the morning, it is a touch of familiarity. They are stressed and busy, it is friendly.’

There is nothing particularly new in Starbucks’ attempts to make the customer feel valued as an individual by generating an illusion of
a personal relationship (Cameron, 2011, p. 201), and Starbucks gives training to the staff (‘green apron book’, see Sens du client, 2008). But is it a successful strategy? Our data show that people are aware of first names being used as a part of the Starbucks image and marketing, but despite this, it is appreciated by many Finns and French people. Some even blame those who do not appreciate the use of first names for the abolition of first names at Starbucks in France:

(15) Comment, Éléonore Bridge’s blog, 18 October 2008
... on ne demande plus les prénoms désormais c’est fin grâce au gens comme vous qui n’apressier pas ce moyen sympatique de briser la glasse (pour information a ce jour la france est le seul pays ou cette ‘tradition’ starbucks a été abandonné!!!! [sic]
‘... first names are no longer asked for, it is over thanks to the people like you who don’t appreciate this sympathetic way of breaking the ice (for your information, France is the only country where this Starbucks “tradition” has been abandoned!!!!’

When Starbucks France (2012) launched a video on its reintroduction of first names, commentators in the data described it as super (‘great’), jadore (‘I love it’) and sympa (‘friendly’); there were only two negative comments among the 21 comments in total.

In our data, traditional Finnish service culture is described as cold, rude and unfriendly by some commentators, while the use of first names is associated with positive words such as friendliness, youthfulness, relaxed and warm. This reflects Cameron’s (2011, p. 206) observation on the contribution of the global service industry to increasing informal address forms.

(16) Student’s comment, e-learning platform, 18 January 2013
Suomessa olen ollut hyvin pettynyt kylmään asiakaspalvelukulttuuriin, ja etunimen käyttö toisi palvelutilanteeseen hieman lämpöä ja asiakas tuntisi itsensä mahdollisesti hieman tärkeämmäksi.
‘I am disappointed with the cold service culture in Finland, and the use of the first name would add some warmth to the service situation and the customer would probably feel he or she is someone who is a more important customer.’

In the French data, conflicting attitudes are expressed towards French service culture: some commentators appreciate French bistros, while others argue that bistro service is not friendly or is even non-existent.
5 Discussion

Our data show that the use of first names is regarded as an American practice both in Finland and France. This relationship can be seen as a 1st order index. It evokes different types of interpretations (2nd order indexes), depending on the commentator’s stance and geographical location.

Differences between the Finnish and the French data can be found especially in those comments which express resistance to Starbucks’ service culture. The comment writers are mainly Finns who criticize the usage of first names by associating it with the following features of American service culture: excessive intimacy, familiarity and intrusiveness. These features, which can be seen as 2nd order indexes of the first-name practice, are contrasted with Finnish service culture that values social and physical distance – see Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept negative face. Although this interpretation is not totally absent in the French comments, there is another social index that is more prevalent in the French data: the social meaning of marketing attributed to American service culture. This interpretation stems from Starbucks being an American company, and it is contrasted with a spontaneous friendliness or a genuine willingness to serve clients.

The conception of false friendliness and the positive attitudes toward the use of first names at Starbucks form two opposites. The defenders of the first-name practice not only mention the practicality of this American custom, but they also emphasize that it makes the service personal and friendly. Use of first names can also be related to the marketing of the American Starbucks brand as a positive value. These 2nd order indexes attributed to the use of first names are common for both Finnish and French commentators, but the Finnish ones display more negative attitudes towards their own service culture than the French do.

6 Conclusions

In this chapter, we have analysed the social meanings given by Finnish and French Internet commentators and interviewees to the usage of first names in service encounters at the American coffee shop chain Starbucks. The first-name practice was introduced to both countries by Starbucks, and to our knowledge, first names had not previously been widely used in this context in either Finland or in France. Because of the American background of the company, its service culture, including the use of first names, is associated
with America and Americans (1st order index). In our data, American features receive both positive and negative interpretations associated with the Starbucks context. These 2nd order indexes are partly shared but partly different in the two languages analysed. As we have shown, social meanings can be found in metalinguistic comments that contribute to the enregisterment of the first-name practice. In this final section, we will discuss how these meanings are related to language ideologies.

The usage of first names is supported in both languages by the argument that it is practical. Comments of this kind reflect a language ideology that focuses on functionality and instrumentalism. In agreement with this ideology, both rationality and the communicative role of a language are emphasized. In other words, the value of a language is evaluated on the basis of its utility (for example, see Wee, 2003; Heller, 2010.)

Some similarities can also be found in the arguments presented by the opponents of the use of first names. Both in the Finnish and French data, use of first names is regarded by some commentators as breaking the norms of local politeness and not belonging to their own culture. The usage of first names is not interpreted as friendliness. Especially the Finnish commentators relate it to excessive intimacy, while the French ones associate it with marketing. Both stances reflect a national and purist ideology according to which language should be protected against foreign influences (Thomas, 1991; Spitzmüller, 2007). Such a view can be contrasted with a pluralist view where foreign influences are considered to enrich, or even improve, one’s own culture, which is not perfect (for example, Wingstedt, 1998, pp. 166–7). In the Finnish data in particular, the use of first names at Starbucks is defended in this way by characterizations of Finnish culture as cold and impolite. Moreover, according to other studies, politeness based on a friendly relationship is more highly valued than politeness based on distance, at least in modern, pluralist Western countries where status and age has become less important (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992, pp. 313–21; Larjavaara, 1999, pp. 9–10).

Although the usage of first names seems to be an established practice at Starbucks in both countries – despite some initial problems especially in France, where it was abolished and then reintroduced – this does not necessarily mean that first-name address will later be used in other service encounters or other contexts. Foreign features, norms or practices are not automatically accepted or well received in new contexts. Instead, they can be rejected due to their inappropriateness to local norms, or at least localized and recontextualized (Blommaert, 2003, 2010; Machin
and Van Leeuwen, 2003; Sifianou, 2013). As long as the use of first names serves as a social index of American culture that is ‘not part of the local culture’, it is possible that it will not spread widely. The practice may continue to be indexed as ‘Starbuckian’, and remain only within the walls of the cafés. However, if this association weakens, the practice may be adopted more widely in service contexts in general.

Notes

1 This study is part of the project *How to address? Variation and change in address practices*, based at the University of Helsinki, which studies address behaviour and attitudes in several languages, concentrating on service encounters.
2 Finnish *sinä* has also colloquial variants (*så, sie*) which are more informal than *sinä*. In addition to pronouns, the choice between T and V forms can also be seen in verb inflection. The subject pronoun is not compulsory in first and second person.
3 The examples cited are presented as they were originally written.
4 The last comment analysed is from 2012, but new comments still keep coming.
5 The irony of the video is that it is clearly made for an English-speaking market: the name that we see written on the takeaway cup is the typically English ‘Tom’. This is an example of global marketing that only partly takes into account local linguistic and cultural norms.
6 Usually, the customers gave their first names, but on our first visit to the Starbucks at Helsinki airport after only a few days the café had been opened, we heard a few last names that were accepted by baristas. However, on our second visit eight months later, if a customer gave their last name, the barista asked for their first name.

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Address in Italian Academic Interactions: The Power of Distance and (Non)-Reciprocity

Maicol Formentelli and John Hajek

Abstract: The chapter offers a detailed description of address practices in Italian academic interactions, based on the reported usage of address forms by students and lecturers via questionnaires. The data reveal that the reciprocal use of V form Lei is the main strategy to convey respect and distance. However, they also show that a frequent practice is the non-reciprocal use of pronouns (Lei-tu) and the combination of lexical forms encoding various degrees of social distance (names, titles, honorifics). Address non-reciprocity is perceived as the natural reflection of different roles and relative age, and is evaluated positively by the majority of students, the increase in familiarity putting students at ease inside and outside class.

Keywords: Italian; academic interactions; address forms; non-reciprocity

1 Introduction

The social rituals of positioning self and others through address in the context of higher education are a complex and intriguing topic of research. Academic institutions are structured according to a hierarchy of social and professional roles that are especially evident in the teacher-learner relationship and encoded in the use of titles, personal names and address pronouns. The generally acknowledged asymmetrical distribution of power between students and teaching staff deriving from rank and age, however, is far from being fixed and unchangeable, as roles and identities are continuously negotiated and ratified at the local level of individual one-to-one interactions, both inside and outside the classroom (Formentelli, 2013; Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). This opens up a wide range of possibilities in the choice of the address strategies, which are influenced by factors such as the level of formality of the setting, the degree of familiarity between the parties, and speakers’ individual preferences.

It seems therefore crucial that people engaged in tertiary education be aware of the address options at their disposal and the appropriate combinations of forms to be used to avoid social sanction. Recent studies have confirmed the importance of appropriate address in marking power and distance in higher education across languages and varieties of the same language (for example, among others, Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009; Formentelli, 2009; Afful and Mwinlaaru, 2012; Merrison, Wilson, Davies and Haugh, 2012; Formentelli and Hajek, 2013; Chejnová, 2014; Burt, 2015). However, despite the increasing global importance of higher education, research in this area is still very limited for most languages, including Italian.

The aim of this chapter is to partially address this gap by offering the most detailed description yet of address practices in Italian academic interactions. This new study relies upon both quantitative and qualitative data. Information was mainly collected by means of questionnaires in two universities in northern Italy – our survey data reflect the reported usage of forms by students and lecturers. These are supplemented by a brief transcription of a naturally occurring interaction recorded in one of the two institutions.
2 Address practice in Italian

Italian, like the majority of European languages, displays a binary distinction of T and V address strategies (Helmbrecht, 2006) that are grammatically codified by means of personal pronouns (mainly tu and Lei) and verbal agreement, and lexically expressed through honorifics (signore, signora, signorina), titles (professore, dottore, ingegnere), personal names, familiarizers and endearments (see Table 6.1).

In the past, Italian used to have a more sophisticated repertoire of V pronouns to convey high social distance and deference (Lei ‘she’, Voi ‘you’, Ella ‘she’, singular, Loro ‘they’, plural; see Niculescu, 1974), which has gradually undergone a process of simplification in the last few decades both in the singular and in the plural (Sobrero, 1999, pp. 417–9). In particular, the occurrence of Ella is nowadays restricted to highly formal written bureaucratic communication, official invitations and institutional speeches, and the plural form Loro is hardly ever used in these and other similar circumstances. The use of the pronoun Voi1 to a single addressee, on the other hand, survives mostly in southern areas of the country and is normally perceived elsewhere as regional, rural and/or antiquated (see Parkinson and Hajek, 2004). As a result, we can say that the pronominal address system in standard Italian still exhibits a T/V distinction, but for most speakers today the repertoire is limited to two main forms in the singular, namely tu (T) and Lei (V), and only one form in the plural, namely voi (T).

The patterns of address described in the literature (for example, Renzi, 1993; Mazzoleni, 1995; Molinelli, 2002; Scaglia, 2003; Maiden and Robustelli, 2007) on contemporary Italian reflect speakers’ generalized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronominal strategies</th>
<th>Nominal strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V forms</td>
<td>T forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lei (singular)</td>
<td>Tu (singular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>voi (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 6.1 Italian pronominal and nominal address strategies

DOI: 10.1057/9781137529923.0012
preference for reciprocal use of forms either: (a) to index familiarity and solidarity between family members, friends and peers (for example, reciprocal *tu/tu* and first names); or (b) to signal social distance and/or mutual respect among less acquainted people and strangers (for example, reciprocal *Lei/Lei*, titles and honorifics). More recently, a gradual expansion of *T* forms has been observed in face-to-face interactions and computer-mediated communication (Suomela-Härmä, 2005; Rebelos and Strambi, 2009) as part of a more general process of informalization of Italian society (Cerruti, Corino and Onesti, 2011).

Non-reciprocal *T/V* strategies (for example, *Lei/tu*, title/first name) may also occur, though to a lesser extent, between speakers where there is an asymmetrical distribution of power associated with age, job rank and social status (Renzi, 1993; Parkinson and Hajek, 2004). This address practice is well established and accepted in the domains of primary and secondary education, but can be perceived as inappropriate and abusive in other hierarchically structured institutions like hospitals and the army, and is therefore avoided or even ruled out through explicit regulation. Renzi (1993, p. 374) makes passing mention of non-reciprocal address as a possible emerging pattern in Italian universities with the increasing use of *tu* and first names to students on the part of the teaching staff, who normally receive the formal pronoun *Lei* and titles in return. A similar comment is made in a small exploratory study on Italian based on 33 respondents (Formentelli, 2008; see also Formentelli and Hajek, 2013, pp. 88–90, who briefly discuss the reported use of address pronouns in class and of nominal address strategies in email correspondence). Nonetheless, detailed information of the kind presented here on the incidence of address non-reciprocity and how it is perceived by participants is not provided in the previous literature on Italian address. Reciprocal use of *V* forms is still considered the default option one expects to experience in academic interactions, despite or because of the evident hierarchical difference between students and their teachers. At least, this is the picture most Italians, when asked, plausibly have in mind. The passage from teenagehood in secondary education into full adulthood at university is generally considered to be critical, alongside distancing in a new institutional setting, in determining the use of *Lei* in the direction of students, while elevated status favours the use of *Lei* by students to their teachers.

Example (1), which features an extract from the popular Italian film *Come tu mi vuoi* by Volfango de Biasi (2007), illustrates the use of *V*
address strategies in a typical conversation taking place within a university setting. The scene opens with a small group of students gathered in a corridor of a university in Rome waiting for an oral exam session to start. Riccardo Croce, a 20-year-old BA student in Communication Sciences and protagonist of the film, asks a teaching assistant in her thirties to be interviewed for the exam. Example (1) captures this brief exchange between Riccardo and the young tutor and part of the oral exam that follows (the relevant address term is highlighted in all examples).

(1) Scenes from the film *Come tu mi vuoi*, Volfango de Biasi (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protagonist</th>
<th>Italian dialogue</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riccardo</td>
<td>Professoressa, mi scusi, posso parlarle un secondo?</td>
<td>‘Professor, excuse me, can I speak with you for a second?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>Mi dica.</td>
<td>‘Tell me.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riccardo</td>
<td>Mi piacerebbe mi interrogasse lei. Sa sono un po’ nervoso e con lei sarei decisamente più a mio agio.</td>
<td>‘I would like to be interviewed by you. You know, I’m a bit nervous and I would definitely feel more at ease with you.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>Come si chiama?</td>
<td>‘What’s your name?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riccardo</td>
<td>Croce. Riccardo Croce.</td>
<td>‘Croce. Riccardo Croce.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>Bene, inizi parlando della teoria del proiettile magico.</td>
<td>‘Ok, start by talking about the magic bullet theory.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riccardo</td>
<td>Si, si, si, erm, la teoria per cui il proiettile fa...</td>
<td>‘Yes, yes, yes, erm, the theory according to which the bullet does...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>Allora, Croce, mi parli della teoria ipodermica.</td>
<td>‘So, Croce, tell me about the hypodermic theory.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riccardo</td>
<td>Si, erm, la teoria ipodermica... erm, è quella sviluppata intorno agli anni venti mi pare, no forse gli anni trenta, vabbè che poi praticamente il periodo è quello. Sa, è che ho sempre avuto un po’ di difficoltà con i numeri, a parte quelli di telefono, e...</td>
<td>‘Yes, erm, the hypodermic theory... erm, it is the one developed around the twenties, I think, no, maybe the thirties, well, basically the period is that one. You know, the fact is I’ve always had difficulties with numbers, apart from telephone numbers, and...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>Mh, non è molto preparato, eh? Va bene, Croce, per questa volta se la cava con venti. Accetta?</td>
<td>‘Mh, you are not very prepared, eh? Ok, Croce, this time you get away with twenty. Do you accept it?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riccardo</td>
<td>Si.</td>
<td>‘Yes.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the fictional exchange does not qualify as particularly formal (see, for example, the idiomatic expression *parlare con qualcuno per un secondo* ['speak with someone for a second’], the colloquial verb *cavar-sela* ['to get away with'], and even the student’s wordplay on telephone numbers) and both participants are young adults, the characters’ different ranks in the academic hierarchy and the asymmetrical distribution of power are activated and foregrounded in the speech event of the oral examination. Hence, speakers exploit address strategies that signal social distance and mutual respect through the explicit acknowledgment of social roles (seen in the title *professoressa*, ‘female professor’), the use of the student’s last name, and the reciprocal use of V pronouns that pervades the dialogue.

3  A closer look at address in academic interactions

Example (1) gives an idea of how reciprocal V forms are habitually used in the Italian university setting. It reflects, however, a simplification of social practice filtered by a cinematic representation of reality that overlooks a rather large ‘grey area’ of variation (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 40) in which the choice of the appropriate address strategy is not as straightforward, and alternative combinations of forms may occur. Likewise, the sporadic comments available in previous research (for example, Renzi, 1993; Formentelli, 2008), mostly based on small datasets or driven by very limited observation and introspective speculation, do not allow for a fine-grained picture of address in Italian academia. A detailed description of the phenomenon requires a more focused approach founded on a substantial corpus of empirical data able to capture a fuller range of recurrent address patterns. The present study attempts to fill this gap, with, as its starting point, a systematic collection of questionnaires reporting students’ personal experiences in daily interactions with their teachers.

3.1  Data and methodology

A total of 194 questionnaires were completed in 2013 and 2014 by Italian students at two universities (one small and one medium-size) in northern Italy, which attract students and lecturers from all
over the country, and which are easy for the authors to access. The smaller university is also the site of Formentelli’s (2008) pilot study. Respondents, all undergraduates, were arranged into three different groups to make possible the analysis of address at a more general level but also the potential identification of patterns of variation in specific disciplines. Group A, 73 students (11 male, 62 female) in Modern Foreign Languages from a small-size university; Group B, 52 students (11 male, 41 female) in Biology from a medium-size university; Group C, 69 students (20 male, 49 female) in Communication Sciences from the same medium-size university. Almost all of respondents of the survey were young adults from 18 to 25 years of age, mainly in their second or third year of study at university. Most of informants were young women (78 per cent on average), approximating the gender distribution of students in the three disciplines observed at the national level (Noè, 2012, p. 4). The relatively balanced composition of respondents in terms of gender and number of students across the three groups and the systematic collection of data may provide new insights into address patterns in Italian that are likely to occur in Italian academia at large.

The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data that would lead to a general description of address patterns in Italian academia, as well as qualitative data focussed on the more specific topic of non-reciprocal address. The investigation of this latter aspect was regarded as particularly important, not only to document the complex balance of power, authority, social distance and proximity underlying address practice, but also to provide empirical evidence for Renzi’s (1993) claim of gradual expansion of non-reciprocal T/V forms in higher education only partially described in Formentelli (2008). The survey therefore opened with a series of questions aimed at deducting quantitative information on the use of nominal and pronominal address strategies during lectures. Address patterns were then further explored qualitatively by eliciting interactional contexts in which the non-reciprocal use of forms was likely to emerge and by inviting respondents to comment on and evaluate non-reciprocal address in student-teacher exchanges according to their experience. Finally, as part of data collection, a recording was made of a formal speech event involving a panel of lecturers and a student defending her final dissertation to validate the actual non-reciprocal use of address forms reported by informants.5
3.2 Discussion of findings

3.2.1 Strategies towards lecturers and students

In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to report on the forms of address they use in class with their lecturers, by selecting from a list of options consisting of pronouns (*Lei, tu, Voi*) and lexical strategies (first name, the titles *professore/professoressa*, the honorifics *signore/signora/signorina*, ‘sir/madam/miss’, first name + last name, title + last name, the shortened vocative *prof*). Summonses (*scusi/scusa*, ‘excuse me-V/ excuse me-T’) and gestures (raising a hand) were also included among the available options to get lecturers’ attention. Figure 6.1 summarizes students’ responses.

The distribution of strategies in Figure 6.1 indicates that only *V* forms (both pronominal and nominal) are considered appropriate when addressing the teaching staff. All respondents agree on the use of the pronoun *Lei* in class, while they completely exclude the pronouns *Voi* and *tu*, most probably for the non-standard and old-fashioned connotation of the former and the unsuitable informality of the latter. First names towards lecturers are never reported as they likewise convey a high degree of familiarity. Along with V pronoun *Lei*, a wide repertoire of lexical *V* strategies is recorded, with different degrees of preference. Most frequent are the titles *professore/professoressa* to acknowledge the academic role and signal respect to the interlocutor (105 respondents,
54 per cent). Conversely, the combination title+last name is seldom mentioned (15 respondents, 8 per cent), possibly because it is longer and less immediate than title alone or because students find it redundant to specify the identity of the lecturer in class. Quite interesting is the rather high occurrence of the vocative prof, a shortened version of professore/professoressa (77 respondents, 40 per cent). This vocative is less formal than a full title and is not necessarily considered polite by addressees. Nonetheless, from our data it appears to be widely employed in association with the V pronoun Lei and very often preceded by the greeting salve (‘hi’) (see also Molinelli, 2002, p. 292fn.). It can be hypothesized that the vocative prof is carried through to university from secondary school, where it is common practice, at least according to our respondents. Finally, among the address strategies opted for by students are verbal summonses and non-verbal gestures (63 respondents, 32 per cent and 61 respondents, 31 per cent respectively), which may indicate a certain resistance to using lecturers’ names and titles. Gestures, in particular, can qualify as address avoidance strategies that can be deliberately exploited to attract the teacher’s attention in class without taking an explicit stance along the T/V dimension.

In the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to report on the address strategies used by lecturers to address students in class. The available response options included the pronouns Lei, tu and voi (the last a T form for collective address – see Table 6.1), and several types of lexical forms (first name, last name, full name, the honorifics signore/signora/signorina, ‘sir/madam/miss’, alone or in combination with a last name). The respondents’ responses are plotted in Figure 6.2.

The picture we get indicates a wider variety of T and V forms in addressing students and consequently greater variation of patterns. As for pronominal strategies, students report that the V pronoun Lei is still the most common form directed to students in lecturer-student exchanges (181 respondents, 93 per cent), but not the sole one, as a relatively high proportion of students report being addressed with the familiar pronoun tu (65 respondents, 34 per cent). The occurrence of the plural pronoun voi (14 respondents, 7 per cent), on the other hand, is not at all surprising if one considers the one-to-many relationship in class and the numerous occasions of collective address.

A similar distribution of T and V forms can be described for lexical address strategies. Figures show lecturers’ preference for V strategies when addressing their students, instantiated in forms expressing
different nuances of interpersonal meaning. Honorifics are the most frequently reported strategy with a rate of 61 per cent (118 respondents) when used in isolation and 7 per cent (13 respondents) when followed by last names. As the great majority of respondents selecting these options are female students, the honorifics occurring in class are likely to be signora (‘madam’) or most probably signorina (‘miss’), given the young age of the addressees. Last names (36 respondents, 19 per cent) and full names (7 respondents, 4 per cent) are also V strategies employed to index social distance in class, though to a lesser extent than honorifics, as they imply the knowledge of the interlocutors’ identity and perhaps a more personal relationship. Finally, in line with the rather high frequency of T pronouns, a quarter of students (51 respondents, 26 per cent) report being addressed by first name in class, providing additional evidence that the expression of familiarity towards students through T forms is fairly common in Italian academic interactions. Conversely, we note that the students make no use of last name, full name or first name when addressing their lecturers, thereby maintaining a higher level of formality.

Some trends can be identified by taking a closer look at the distribution of T forms in the three groups of respondents (Table 6.2).

![Figure 6.2: Informants’ reported address strategies towards students in class](image)

Use of T pronoun tu towards students is especially frequent in group A, where it is reported by 33 out of 73 respondents (45 per cent); group
A more clear-cut distribution can be observed for first names, which are almost exclusively reported in group A (45 out of 73 respondents, 62 per cent) and only mentioned by few respondents in group B (3 out of 52 respondents, 6 per cent) and group C (3 out of 69 respondents, 4 per cent). The higher frequency of first names (62 per cent) compared to T pronoun *tu* (45 per cent) can be explained by the fact that names may sometimes be used by lecturers in association with V pronoun *Lei*, a combination that is also outlined in Formentelli and Hajek (2013, p. 90, reporting data from Formentelli, 2008) and signals a gradual increase in familiarity without necessarily denoting informality. With all due caution, it appears, based on our data, that the use of pronominal and nominal T forms in addressing students is favoured in the smaller university, where students and lecturers are more likely to be in closer contact and might develop a more personal relationship along with the professional one. In the medium-size institution with a larger number of students, on the other hand, T pronoun *tu* is not infrequent, but the use of first names is rare, presumably as it is more difficult for lecturers to know students individually. More comparable data from other universities are needed to substantiate and generalize this claim.

### 3.2.2 Emerging patterns of address in a university setting

Moving from the frequencies of T and V strategies reported in the questionnaires, two major patterns of address can be described in Italian academic interactions: reciprocal address and non-reciprocal address, each with very specific characteristics. As expected, reciprocal

**Table 6.2 Distribution of T forms across groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Tu</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>First name</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>No. of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group A: Small-size</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university, degree in Modern Foreign Languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B: Medium-size university, degree in Biology</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C: Medium-size university, degree in Communication Sciences</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B and group C follow with clearly lower rates, as seen in the same table.
V pronoun Lei constitutes the default strategy to convey respect and social distance between lecturers and students. By contrast, reciprocal use of T form tu is never reported, contra Renzi (1993), who says, without providing evidence, that it is also possible (see also endnote (1)), most likely because it is deemed too informal and inappropriate in the tertiary educational context.

The far more significant finding is the extent of non-reciprocal address in Italian universities, which is reported in several combinations of both pronominal and nominal forms. The most evident pattern of non-reciprocity that can be drawn from quantitative data involves lecturers’ use of T forms (tu and/or first name) and students’ use of V forms (Lei and titles). Combining the figures in Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2, we gather that non-reciprocal T/V address is reported by as much as one-third of respondents (34 per cent of informants reported lecturers using T pronoun tu when addressing students, but all students report using only the V form Lei in return).

The considerable relevance of non-reciprocity is further confirmed in the qualitative survey questions, ‘Ti è mai capitato che un docente ti abbia dato del TU o chiamato per nome mentre tu gli hai dato del LEI e chiamato professore? Se SÌ, in quale circostanza?’ (‘Has it ever happened that a lecturer addressed you with TU and first name while you addressed him/her with LEI and the title professore/professoressa? If YES, in what circumstances?’), to which almost 50 per cent of students (96 respondents) answered affirmatively. What also emerges from the respondents’ comments is that non-reciprocal address is not restricted to teaching activities, but may occur in various contexts of interaction inside and outside the classroom, such as requests of clarification after the lesson, private meetings during office hours, chance encounters in the library and other university buildings, and oral exams.

An example of lecturers’ actual use of T forms reported by students in the questionnaires is documented in example (2), taken from a spoken interaction recorded during a graduation exam in the small-size institution surveyed in this study. The sample of naturally occurring data confirms that T address strategies are used by lecturers also in very formal and official academic contexts such as a student’s defence of her BA thesis in front of the examination board. After introducing the candidate to the committee with her full name, professor M., who is also the student’s thesis supervisor, asks her a series of questions addressing her with T pronoun tu. The frequent use of T pronoun by the lecturer
(the student does not use any address form throughout the speech event) acknowledges the advancement of familiarity in the student-lecturer relationship which has probably taken place as a result of their regular meetings as part of preparation of the dissertation.

(2) Example from a graduation exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Italian dialogue</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor M. to examination</td>
<td>Il titolo del lavoro di Laura Molinari è 'Le funzioni del dialogo nella storia</td>
<td>‘The title of Laura Molinari’s work is the functions of dialogue in the secondary story of the captive of Quijote and in the two comedies El trato de Argel and Los baños de Argel.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board</td>
<td>secondaria del cautivo del Quijote e nelle due commedie El trato de Argel e Los</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>baños de Argel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor M. to student</td>
<td>A questo punto direi che potresti esporci brevemente i risultati e il lavoro</td>
<td>‘Now I think that you could illustrate briefly the results and the work that you have done for this thesis in Spanish.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>che hai fatto per questa tesi, in spagnolo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[The student starts to illustrate the contents of her thesis in Spanish]</td>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor M.</td>
<td>Adesso se vuoi puoi passare all’italiano.</td>
<td>‘Now if you want you can switch to Italian.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[The student goes on in Italian]</td>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor M.</td>
<td>Ecco, vuoi parlarci di queste funzioni e che diversità hai riscontrato?</td>
<td>‘Right, do you want to tell us about these functions and which differences you observed?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[The student answers the question]</td>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor M.</td>
<td>Hai trovato degli esempi nei dialoghi che hai analizzato?</td>
<td>‘Did you find any example in the dialogues that you analyzed?’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides setting and type of activity, age is also a parameter that seems to favour the shift to more informal address strategies in academic interactions. According to some informants, younger lecturers are more inclined to use the T pronoun and to establish more familiar relationships than older lecturers.

(3) Tendenzialmente quelli [i.e., docenti] più giovani tendono a darmi del tu e ad essere più informali rispetto a professori più anziani.

‘Basically younger ones [i.e., lecturers] tend to address me with tu and are more informal than older professors.’
(4) I have noticed greater familiarity on the part of younger lecturers and teaching assistants, as they are closer to us in terms of age.

Similarly, but from the opposite perspective, some students do expect to be addressed informally rather than formally simply because they are young and would find it less natural to be addressed otherwise (see also students’ comments in the following section).

(5) I’m young and I don’t expect them to address me with Lei.

(6) Some [lecturers] address me with Lei, but since I’m very young I find it strange and prefer they address me with tu.

This reported preference for tu shared by younger teachers and students belonging to contiguous generations, in contrast with the more formal approach recounted in the case of much older lecturers, may be interpreted as a signal of a gradual change that is taking place in the Italian academia, at least in the two institutions surveyed in this study. This would be consistent with the informalization of social exchanges already documented in other settings (Suomela-Härmä, 2005; Rebelos and Strambi, 2009; Cerruti, Corino and Onesti, 2011).
title vs. honorific, title vs. full name and title vs. last name establish intrinsically asymmetrical patterns that can be considered instances of non-reciprocal address, even though they all fall within the repertoire of V forms.

3.2.3 Students’ evaluation of address non-reciprocity

One last aspect that is worth exploring here is students’ perceptions of non-reciprocal address in academic interactions. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is not complete agreement on the appropriateness of address non-reciprocity in Italian institutional settings, where it may be fully accepted as the standard social practice, as in primary and secondary schools, or it may be challenged and banned as abusive, as it is in hospitals and the army. To our knowledge, no detailed studies have been carried out so far that specifically focus on address non-reciprocity in academic settings and for this reason the picture is still blurred for this domain of interaction. Some indications may be found in our survey in students’ responses to the last question dealing with non-reciprocal address and following the two questions already discussed: ‘Come valuti questa esperienza o come la valuteresti se ti succedesse? Commenta’ (‘How do you evaluate this experience [i.e., non-reciprocal address] or how would you evaluate it should you experience it? Comment’). The comments provided by 160 of the 194 respondents converge into four main categories of evaluation, reflecting complementary views on the phenomenon, which we have labelled normal, unusual, positive and negative. Table 6.3 shows the distribution of responses in the four categories.

More than half of respondents (87 respondents, 54 per cent) refer to non-reciprocal address as a normal practice in academic interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Three comments were included in more than one category as they expressed more than one opinion. For this reason, the figures in Table 6.3 add up to 163 respondents and 101 per cent.
Most of the comments are short and clear assertions such as *È normale* (‘It’s normal’), *Non ci farei caso* (‘I wouldn’t take any notice’), *Non presterei attenzione a ciò* (‘I wouldn’t pay attention to it’), *Ci sono abituata* (‘I’m used to it’). Other respondents make more elaborate statements that account for the reasons behind their assessment. According to numerous respondents, age is the most relevant parameter in their evaluation of non-reciprocal address as a normal practice. In examples (7) and (8), respondents agree that, as young addressees, they expect to be addressed informally, and argue that the unidirectional use of *tu* on the part of teachers is not necessarily disrespectful if one bears in mind the age difference between lecturer and student. It is rather the use of *tu* towards professors that is regarded as impolite.

(7) Credo sia normale, soprattutto se c’è molta differenza d’età. Non mi dà fastidio.
‘I think it’s normal, especially if there’s a big age difference. It doesn’t bother me.’

(8) A me sinceramente non cambia niente, sono giovane e non mi offendo. Non la vedo come una mancanza di rispetto. E’ più irrispettoso un alunno che si rivolge con il tu a un professore.
‘Honestly, it doesn’t make much difference to me, I’m young and I don’t get offended. I don’t see it as lack of respect. It is more disrespectful when a student addresses a lecturer with *tu*.’

Other comments, like the one in example (9), add that undergraduates may be familiar with non-reciprocal address from their past experience in high school, where the use of T forms towards students is an established custom, and they continue to accept it as normal also at university. This reinforces the idea that the scope of some address practices between teacher and student may extend beyond the boundaries of secondary education and gradually spread to higher education (see also earlier discussion on the use of the vocative *prof*).

(9) Essendo abituata già così dal liceo ed essendoci una differenza d’età è comunque una situazione di normalità.
‘Being used to it from high school and considering the age difference, it is a normal situation anyway.’

The second most common category to which respondents’ comments are assigned is that of positive evaluation, reported by 58 students
(36 per cent). The use of pronoun *tu* and first names by lecturers to students is given high value by students, regardless of whether or not the same strategies are reciprocated. As examples (10) and (11) illustrate, *T* forms are perceived by students as a way to mark an increase in familiarity in the relationship, which is no longer restricted to the professional roles of teacher and learner, but may develop into a respectful personal rapport. Moreover, the reduced social distance expressed by pronoun *tu* and first names is paralleled by a decrease in formality and makes students feel more at ease during teaching activities, thus fostering involvement and participation.

(10)  Positiva! Nonostante il ruolo che ricopriamo all’interno di un’istituzione, si può sempre creare un rapporto di stima reciproca e di confidenza. Questa può far bene per entrambe le parti.

‘Positive! In spite of the position we hold within the institution, a rapport of mutual respect and familiarity can always be created. This can benefit both parties.’

(11) La valuto in maniera positiva, in quanto percepisco un distacco minore a livello sociale, come se ci fosse un minimo in più di confidenza e mi sento più a mio agio nel chiedere o nel fare domande, come se il docente volesse creare un rapporto più confidenziale.

‘I evaluate it in a positive way, since I feel a lower social distance, as if there were a bit more familiarity and I feel more at ease in asking questions, as if the lecturer wants to create a friendlier relationship.’

In contrast with the examples already discussed, a small minority of 13 respondents (8 per cent) offer a completely different opinion. Their comments give voice to a negative evaluation of non-reciprocal *T/V* address, with which students may feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. Some of them describe the non-reciprocal use of pronoun *tu* by lecturers as a lack of respect towards students that hinges on fake familiarity. Reciprocal *V* forms are regarded as more appropriate among unacquainted adults engaged in a professional relationship like the one in the academic environment, for example:

(12) Una mancanza di rispetto nei miei confronti, se io do del Lei desidero essere trattato di conseguenza.

‘A lack of respect towards me, if I address [someone] with *Lei* I would like to be treated accordingly.’
Non mi piace in quanto, anche se è una forma di confidenza, bisogna ricordare che siamo tutti adulti e nessuno ha una ‘reale confidenza’ con il professore. E’ giusto mantenere un distacco.

‘I don’t like it because, even though it is a mark of familiarity, one should keep in mind that we are all adults and no one has a “real familiarity” with the lecturer. It is right to keep some distance.’

Penso che sia giusto che anche i docenti diano del Lei agli studenti perché è una questione di rispetto reciproco.

‘I think it is right that lecturers also use Lei towards students because it is a question of mutual respect.’

Finally, very few students (5 respondents, 3 per cent) report that non-reciprocal use of T forms is unusual, but should not be seen as a negative practice and even mention that it may have positive consequences on student-lecturer relationship. They, however, comment that it would be unexpected and surprising, since such an address practice is rather far from their everyday experience at university.

Proverei soltanto un po’ di stupore perché non sono abituata ad avere un professore che mi dà del tu.

‘I would only be a little surprised because I’m not used to be addressed with tu by a professor.’

Penso che dal punto di vista psicologico sarebbe positivo per lo studente, ma deontologicamente strano.

‘I think that from a psychological point of view it would be positive for the student, but deontologically unusual.’

Overall, we see that an overwhelming 90 per cent of student respondents consider non-reciprocal address to be normal and/or positive – associating it with the difference in age between student and academic, but also with previously established practice (in secondary schools) maintained in the new environment. They also see this kind of address as indicating increased familiarity and friendliness as well as facilitating greater ease in context, none of which requires the use of reciprocal T forms. The few (10 per cent) who view non-reciprocal address at university as negative or unusual on the other hand emphasize the importance of mutual respect and distance as adults. The large discrepancy between reported attitude (90 per cent are accepting of non-reciprocal address) and practice (for example, only 34 per cent report receiving tu) points to a large gap between potentially desired
and acceptable behaviour on the part of students and actual behaviour by academics in practice.

4 Conclusion

It remains the case that in Italian academic contexts between students and teachers, reciprocal use of V/V forms (seen especially in the reciprocal use of formal Lei) continues to be the norm. However, a relatively large proportion of student respondents also report non-reciprocal address, for example receiving tu and/or use of first names, but not doing the same in return. Additional data not reported here for reasons of space indicate that this pattern is not limited to teaching activities, but seems to occur also outside the classroom in chance encounters in the university buildings, in personal one-to-one meetings and even in formal and official examinations. It is clear that the age of both lecturers and students is a crucial parameter influencing the use of T strategies by teachers and the positive evaluation of non-reciprocal address by students. The positive attitude towards non-reciprocity seems also to be fostered by students’ familiarity with this address practice experienced in secondary school.

Finally, non-reciprocal address in the university context is certainly more frequent in Italy than is reported for France or Germany by Clyne, Norrby and Warren (2009, pp. 94–8), and is consistent with the observation by Schüpbach et al. (2007) about the marked persistence or strength of non-reciprocal address in Italy when compared to elsewhere in continental Europe. While the current sample only includes two universities, the evidence indicates that the university is not a monolithic setting for address, although much work remains to be done. The analysis of more empirical data recorded in a variety of naturally occurring academic interactions would, for instance, add significantly to this picture by providing further evidence of the local factors (for example, institutional size and setting) that can impact on address behaviour.

Notes

1 Voi with initial capital indicates V address while voi in lower case is used as plural, collective address.
Renzi makes even more fleeting reference to possible use of reciprocal *tu/tu*. We return briefly to this point in discussion later in the main text.

In the Italian university system the evaluation ranges from 18 (lowest mark) to 30 with merit (highest mark). Students have the right to re-sit the exam if they decide not to accept the mark they are given.

Comparisons with Formentelli’s (2008) published results are difficult to make and are generally avoided here, given substantial methodological differences.

The date of recording was 14 April 2014, and the duration was about 22 minutes.

The potentially offensive tone of this colloquial version of the full title professore/professoressa is, for instance, reported in a discussion forum hosted by Zanichelli Dizionari, in which one of the guests of the forum comments: *L’ abbreviazione colloquiale ‘prof’ è segno di maleeducazione* (‘The colloquial abbreviation “prof” is a sign of impoliteness’), http://dizionaripiu.zanichelli.it/dizionario-di-stile/2011/11/29/scritture-raffinate-6, date accessed 30 April 2015.

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The Last Word on Address

Jane Warren

Abstract: The concluding remarks serve to situate the empirical chapters in a broader context of address research. They outline how each study contributes to the overall theme of the volume – that is, address as a form of social action through which social and interpersonal relationships are encoded and negotiated in and across cultures and languages – and point to future research.

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*Je tweete, donc je tutoie* (‘I tweet, therefore I use tu’) is a fair representation of how many people in France perceive the use of address pronouns on Twitter (Hadni, 2012). This could be due to a tweet’s tight 140-character limit (*tu* is, after all, two characters shorter than *vous*), but there is a general perception in France – and elsewhere – that address usage is undergoing change, with address practices in social media more informal and relaxed than in face-to-face exchanges. Social networking sites are themselves egalitarian spaces where users can remain anonymous (Twitter), or can experience heightened emotional closeness (Facebook) (Lawn, 2012). All of these elements make the low social distance of *tu* a perfect fit.

However, there are dissenting voices. There was an online furore in France when the then director of the *Nouvel Observateur* – a left-leaning news magazine – tweeted *Qui vous autorise à me tutoyer?* (‘Who gave you permission to use *tu* with me?’) to one of his followers. Joffrin considered that the use of *tu*, combined with the content and tone of the follower’s tweet, was aggressive and showed a lack of respect (Joffrin, 2011).

These two recent snapshots of social media and address terms in France demonstrate a number of important themes and approaches that have been examined in this collection, in which address practices are viewed as social action. The chapters have expertly shown that the way we address one another plays a significant role in constructing and shaping identities, social relationships and group affiliations, in a variety of European contexts and languages.

To begin with, the volume helps to fill a gap in current research by presenting analyses of recorded address usage. In the examples from French social media already mentioned, general perceptions and isolated examples do not provide a coherent and comprehensive understanding of how social relations are shaped through address practices on networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. To understand the complexities of language usage on the Internet, we need to examine real data and analyse how relationships are negotiated in particular contexts. Chapter 2 did just this in its analysis of Internet posts on the reader forums of German, Austrian and Swiss newspapers. Heinz L. Kretzenbacher and Doris Schüpbach showed that, contrary to the general assumption that the German-language Internet would use mainly T address, V address was the most common form in the data they analysed. Variation in usage was partly related to identity factors such as the use of pseudonyms and individual preferences. This study is part of an emerging new field of
enquiry – address in computer-mediated communication. There is great scope here to expand research on address use in social media, and there are signs that this is underway, a point I will return to.

The use of the media in general as a source of real usage was exemplified in Chapters 1 and 3. The two studies used as their data radio interviews and film commercials, respectively. This, again, is an expanding area of address research. In Chapter 1, Roel Vismans delved into the subtleties of address usage in pluricentric Dutch language. In Europe, Dutch is spoken in the Netherlands and Flanders, Belgium, each variety having distinct language norms. From his analysis of address in radio interviews, Vismans was able to show that Belgian Dutch – Flemish – continues to distinguish itself from the Netherlands’ variety. The explicit exchanges in the interviews about address terms also demonstrated the importance of these small units of language in constructing the relationship between interviewer and guest, and in highlighting the interpersonal dynamics of what happens when two varieties of the same language meet.

Chapter 3 showed the value of recorded data with real-time depth. The Swedish film commercials analysed by Maria Fremer not only gave us insights into language change in Sweden, they also provided precious visual and cultural markers of the social transformations that Sweden went through during the 1960s, as egalitarian and democratic ideals spread across Swedish society. What is remarkable is that the wave of social change that was sweeping across Europe at the time – think of ‘May 68’ in France, for example – actually continued in Sweden, with the resulting near universal *du*. Fremer’s analysis demonstrated the importance of audiovisual archives in showing the complexities and richness of the social and cultural context of changes in address practices. In the commercials, linguistic informality represented by *du* – Gun Widmark’s (1994, p. 223) ‘easy attire of the *du*-suit’ quoted by Fremer – was accompanied by a whole range of informal behaviours from the presenters and actors, who talked with their mouths full, sported messy hairstyles and even appeared in their underwear. Deeper societal change was reflected by indications that gender roles were starting to be challenged and that formerly taboo topics could now be raised in the public space of the film commercial.

A second significant aspect of the volume is the analysis of actual exchanges in particular contexts such as service encounters, illustrated by Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 gave us a taste of the scope and innovation of the bi-national research project *Interaction and Variation in Pluricentric*
Languages: Communicative Patterns in Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish. Catrin Norrby, Camilla Wide, Jenny Nilsson and Jan Lindström demonstrated the importance of recording and examining the brief encounters that are part of our daily lives. They found that the biggest difference in address usage in the service encounters they studied was not between the national varieties of Swedish – although there was some variation – but between older and younger customers in Sweden. Older customers over 50 were more likely to use T address than those under 50. The under-50s generation did not go through the du-reform and did not therefore experience the negativity surrounding the V pronoun ni at the time. It seems that the over-50s du-reform generation, on the other hand, continue to make the most of opportunities to use egalitarian du. This finding reflects the continuing impact of societal transformations on address practices in Sweden for different generations.

Chapter 5 took an innovative approach to its analysis of the use of first names in service encounters in Starbucks cafés in Finland and France. The significance of the study lies in its analysis of the encounter of global and local norms. American multinational Starbucks aims to transfer the ‘global’ address norm of using first names with customers in the ‘local’ contexts of Finland and France, where the use of first names in service encounters is not the national norm. Johanna Isosävi and Hanna Lappalainen’s observations of actual service encounters were supplemented by interviews with waiters and customers, and contextualized by an analysis of Internet postings. This data triangulation allowed the authors to present a rich and nuanced analysis of address usage and the social meanings and language ideologies attached to the use of first names in what is a multinational space in Finland and France.

Chapter 6 provided insights into address practices in Italian, a language that has significant individual, regional and stylistic variation, and which has been the focus of limited research. Maicol Formentelli and John Hajek revealed the tension in the Italian address system through their analysis of how students and lecturers perceive academic interactions. While it is generally recognized that there is a gradual expansion of informality in Italian society, within the higher education context issues of solidarity, power and authority come to the fore. This has resulted in a situation of possible non-reciprocal use, in which students use V forms to address their lecturers – explicitly acknowledging their lecturers’ authority – but with lecturers showing some tendency to use T forms to address their students. The questionnaire format of the data collection
allowed the authors to explore in depth students’ reactions to non-reciprocal address – for the most part they see it as ‘normal’ or have a positive attitude towards it. Close relative age plays a role in the students’ positive evaluation, as does a perception that T forms mark an increase in familiarity in the relationship, fostering involvement and participation in teaching and learning activities. These are fascinating insights into a complex phenomenon, further illuminated by film and recorded data.

This collection illustrates the breadth of address research in Europe, and indicates the dynamic and exciting research that is underway in the field. The authors are members of the International Network of Address Research (INAR, 2015). This informal network, which promotes address research and academic exchange, is important in supporting and encouraging new research on address practices. INAR regularly publicizes conferences and workshops, and each year it publishes a bibliography of address. As such, it is a key starting point for anyone interested in what is currently happening in the field. The volume has presented the initial findings of two major projects. Interaction and Variation in Pluricentric Languages: Communicative Patterns in Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish (Stockholm University, 2015), running until 2020, is expanding our understanding of communicative phenomena such as address practice as social action in three contexts that are part of many people’s everyday experiences: service encounters, healthcare, and higher education. The project How to address? Variation and change in address practices, based at the University of Helsinki, is studying address behaviour and attitudes in several languages, concentrating on service encounters, and includes a sub-project on address practices in social media (University of Helsinki, 2015).

To conclude, the continuing strength of address research is reflected in this volume, and its authors are leading the way. Through the analysis of a variety of data types, collection methods, and approaches to analysis, the authors offer the reader the latest fascinating insights into the scope of address research and its future directions.

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