

***Address practice as social action:
European perspectives***
Catrin Norrby and Camilla Wide (eds) (2015)

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Address practice as social action opens with an overview by the editors of practices in Europe and summarizes the history of address research, covering a broad range of disciplinary approaches which have contributed to the development of the field: sociolinguistics, the sociology of language (domain analysis), pragmatics (deixis), politeness, critical discourse analysis (power relations), communities of practice, as well as stylistic and register analysis. The six research chapters are then described, followed by a description of the summary and review chapter by Jane Warren, this last not further reviewed here.

Vismans' study examines address variation between the 'northern' variety of Dutch (Netherlands) and the 'southern' (Flemish Belgium) in cross-national radio interviews. Three (of the dataset's 57) radio interviews of Flemish academics by Dutch radio hosts of a late-night show were analyzed. Other data, such as communication with the program's editorial assistant, provided context and insights on the results. One revelation was that prior to the on-air interview the two interlocutors discussed the form and content of the interview; in some cases they discussed the address forms they would use.

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In one interview the audience is made aware of this pre-conversation after the interviewer says, after using T several times while receiving V: ‘we had agreed to say “*je*”, but the Fleming in you is stubborn, he continues to say “*u*”’ (p. 22). At some point the interviewer uses V but then laughs nervously and suggests she is ‘becoming Flemish’. Vismans refers to this as ‘slipping’, which may be the case, however, the interviewer may subconsciously be engaging in linguistic convergence by accommodating to the pattern her guest uses, followed perhaps by a sense that she should conform to the expected norms of her Dutch audience.

The study confirms the dynamic nature of address, even within a single interaction, and highlights the interest that speakers have in address, this being the only aspect of variation in language use mentioned by the interlocutors.

Kretzenbacher and Schüpbach examine internet forums in Austria, Switzerland and Germany, focusing on variation in this pluricentric language situation. The chapter comprises five sections: address in German, address in computer-mediated communication (CMC), newspaper forums, a case study, and the conclusion.

Given the widespread notion that in German T reigns in online communicative contexts, despite evidence to the contrary, the authors examine address use in reader’s forums in six newspapers, two from each country, one representing the political center-left; the other, center-right. Their analyses focused on reader response rather than dialogue, finding that the absence of an explicit address form was most common. They provide both quantitative data on the usage of explicit and implied address in the newspapers, as well as a micro-analysis of several conversational threads, reflecting on how the online usage compares to the offline communication patterns in each country. They find that online address patterns in these online communities of practice do not always correlate with those found in offline communication. Further, variation can be linked to the purpose of the communication (e.g., readers engaged in presenting their views, rather than engaging others in a discussion, are more likely to omit address [p. 39]), changes in tone in a conversational thread (p. 41) or other pragmatic objectives, moderators’ use of forms or the newspapers’ instructions to readers (p. 45).

In chapter 3 Fremer focuses on the increasing use of Swedish T (*du*) during the 20th century, a change that intensified in the late ’60s and early ’70s and came to be known as the ‘*du*-reform’. Fremer lays out the shifting patterns of address, providing further details on address changes occurring during the period of the *du*-reform. Her data come from Swedish advertising films from 1915 to 1975. The data section is divided into three parts: the use of singular V (*ni*) to viewers, with examples from 1939, the ’50s and 1963; use of T (*du*) in the 1950s; and use of T (*du*) as the unmarked form after 1967.

Fremer highlights the complexity of the address form system before the *du*-reform and charts the shift from *ni* to *du* as the unmarked form. The data is interesting and the individual analyses are clear and convincing. However, as the chapter's focus is ostensibly the transition to unmarked *du* beginning in the '60s, the decision to include material from as early as 1939, yet using 1975 as the terminal date, is not clear. A more balanced approach would have been to bracket a specific amount of time (e.g., 30 years) on either side of 1970.

In chapter 4 Norrby, Wide, Nilsson and Lindström examine address form use in pluricentric Swedish, comparing service encounters conducted in Swedish in Sweden vs. Finland. Five sections follow the introduction; they present the background of Swedish as a pluricentric language, along with an overview of the Swedish address form system and a review of the literature of address for Swedish. The core sections of the chapter present a description of the dataset, the quantitative and qualitative results obtained and a discussion of the findings.

Their dataset contains 318 audio- and video-recorded interactions at theater box offices and event-booking venues in both countries. For both the Swedish-Swedish and Finnish-Swedish samples they found usage differences between staff and customers generally as well as across age groups. For instance, while use of T (*du*) predominates in both samples, speakers under 50 are less likely than older speakers to address the other with any form at all, preferring to avoid direct address (p. 83). In the qualitative analyses on instances in which address forms are not used, the authors carefully distinguish between expressions in service encounters which typically omit reference to the addressee, focusing instead on the object of the transactions.

In contrast to the other chapters, which begin with a description and/or history of address form usage, Isosävi and Lappalainen's chapter on 'First names in Starbucks: A clash of cultures?' begins with the sociocultural situation in which the address forms play out. They take the position that multinational companies set the stage for the meeting of global and local patterns, rather than simply substituting the patterns of the company's home country to the host countries. After their introduction, in which they frame address practices as part of the globalized service encounter culture of Starbucks, they present addressing practices in Finnish and French, as well as a description of their methodology and theoretical considerations. Their fourth section centers on the social meanings of soliciting and using the first name of internet commentators and interviewees and distinguishes between positive and negative attitudes. Isosävi and Lappalainen consider the language ideologies associated with the acceptance of patterns which run counter to national norms of address in service encounters, pointing to the

'practicality' of the use of first names (p. 113), noting that by focusing on the utility of the language, as opposed to unmarked interpretations of T (intimacy, friendliness), the use of such patterns appears to be more acceptable. Opponents to the use of first name find consolation in the idea that the introduction of patterns deemed 'American' may not be carried over into service encounters in other establishments (p. 113). The researchers themselves take a similar position in assessing the potential spread of first name use with its association with America (p. 114).

Formentelli and Hajek examine address in Italian academic interactions. Using a hybrid methodology that combines analysis of authentic speech, in the form of a recorded oral dissertation defense, and reported use via questionnaires, the authors conclude that while reciprocal V address continues to be the norm in interactions between university professors and their students, there is an increase in non-reciprocal address (V to professors, T to students). Fifty-four percent of informants viewed non-reciprocal address as 'normal', with a lower 38% viewing this usage positively (p. 133).

General comments on book

Norrby and Wide make an important contribution to the field of address form research with this book examining authentic language use in six languages, three of which (Dutch, Swedish and Finnish) have traditionally been underrepresented in the international literature; the other languages are French, German and Italian. Given its size, this volume provides surprising breadth in the languages analyzed, the communicative contexts explored and theoretical and methodological underpinnings embraced. Despite its diversity, this edited volume is cohesive, and with its primary focus on authentic language, this book helps fill a gap in a field dominated by studies of attitudes or reported use. The editors rightly suggest that the results provide evidence that address form systems are dynamic, though the changes may lead to new, 'stable' system (p. 4).

There are instances, however, in which one author could well have made use of concepts or theories employed by another, thus providing not only additional analytical insights to their own work but contributing to a volume which is even more cohesive. For example, Formentelli and Hajek (chapter 6) note that non-reciprocal address in the Italian universities studied is more widespread than that which has been reported in German and French universities, but no mention of contact with Vismans (chapter 1) is provided, nor is there evidence that attempts to bring Flemish into the discussion were made. Conversely, Vismans might have

clarified for the reader whether reciprocal V, denoting respect, is a feature of universities in Flanders as well as in Italy, thus predisposing the Flemish speaker to maintain V, despite previously 'agreeing' to use T.

Overall, however, the studies are well-researched and presented. The bibliographies are useful, presenting both references in English and in the languages being studied, which will benefit address form researchers generally.

In summary, this book is a welcome and valuable contribution to the field.

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