

○ ADDRESS IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE

The way we address one another is crucial in marking social relations, and is thus central to human relationships. Address also reflects cultural values and acts as an indicator of major social and political changes that affect human relationships and social networks. The purpose of this issue is to provide a worldwide perspective on address practices in a range of languages, using various methodologies. The languages under investigation are, in alphabetical order: Dili Tetum, Finnish, French, German, Indonesian, Swedish and Ukrainian. This issue is also the first reasonably comprehensive overview in English of address pronoun use in European and Asian national languages that have been comparatively neglected in the literature (Finnish, Ukrainian, Dili Tetum and Indonesian).

Much research into address has taken as its starting point Brown and Gilman's (1960) seminal work, which set up the opposition of less formal T pronouns (cf. French *tu*) and more formal V pronouns (cf. French *vous*). The other dominant opposition established by Brown and Gilman was between the power and the solidarity semantics: non-reciprocal use of V by one interlocutor and T by the other expressed a power relationship, whereas the reciprocal use of T or V marked a solidarity bond. As becomes clear from the discussion in a number of the articles in this issue, this dichotomy is problematic, in light of e.g. the decrease in non-reciprocal pronoun use, some detachment of T from the notion of solidarity, considerable intra- and inter-personal variation in address rules, and some reversal of earlier T tendencies.

In addition, address is a major pitfall in intercultural communication as similar deictic dichotomies may have distinct functions in different languages and cultures. Address rules are in fact rarely adequately described in textbooks or grammars, and thus address systems are a particular challenge for second language learners. Languages with a number of pronominal and nominal address forms, such as Indonesian, naturally present a challenge to a language learner from an English language background. But even languages that have a simple pronominal dichotomy, such as *tu* and *vous* in French, pose problems for language learners, as native speaker choices are based on a complex set of social factors rarely examined in the language classroom. We hope that the articles in this issue serve to tease out the complexities of address usage in a number of languages, thus constituting a useful reference tool for learners and teachers alike.

The specific aims of the issue are as follows:

1. To compare closely related languages, even those languages that, in terms of pronominal address forms, appear to be very similar (e.g. French and Swedish). In these

languages, choice of linguistic form can be motivated by markedly different understandings of social relations and their expression;

2. To extend the comparison by including languages that have substantially different address systems, such as Indonesian and Dili Tetum, which have a range of pronominal and nominal address forms. In such a comparison, Ukrainian can be classified as an intermediary system, sharing as it does characteristics of a classic T/V pronominal dichotomy alongside a series of distinct nominal address forms;
3. To highlight the variety of current approaches to the study of address systems. The articles are informed by a range of theoretical perspectives, including sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and descriptive linguistics. These perspectives are reflected in the methodological approaches and data collected: from established sociolinguistic tools such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, to conversational data and written texts.

The first three articles all report on a comparative project, *Address in some western European languages*, funded by the Australian Research Council and based at the University of Melbourne. The project uses varied methodologies to examine changes in the address systems of French, German and Swedish, as used in five countries (France, Germany, Austria, Sweden and Finland respectively). It employs both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, including focus groups, interviews, participant observation, and chat groups. To explore national as well as regional variation, data have been collected at seven sites: Paris and Toulouse for French; Vienna, Mannheim and Leipzig for German; Gothenburg and Vaasa for Swedish. Each of these languages, which all have two address pronouns to mark distinctions in the singular, contributes a different set of issues to the discussion of address. Warren, in her article on French, shows that individual preferences can influence address pronoun choice in distinct ways within and outside the workplace, with individual variation more common outside the work domain. In German, Kretzenbacher, Clyne and Schüpbach demonstrate that there are three prototypical situations – informal T as unmarked form of address, formal V as unmarked form of address, and a situation in which the two systems co-exist – which give rise to a complex interplay of competing rules and preferences. Norrby demonstrates that the V pronoun is disappearing in the two national varieties of Swedish, Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish, with the exception of a controversial reentry in service encounters in Sweden-Swedish, where age is the most significant factor influencing the choice. Norrby's results indicate that there is substantial variation between the two national varieties of Swedish, with less use of V and more variation in address choice in Sweden-Swedish.

The following four articles in the issue examine address usage both within Europe – in Finnish and Ukrainian – and in the South-East Asian region – in Indonesian, and Dili Tetum, spoken in East Timor. The Finnish article, by Nyblom, reports on address pronoun usage in a language contact situation among Finnish and Finland-Swedish students in Vaasa. The study is based on questionnaire data, and the results indicate that the Finnish speakers tend to use V more than the Finland-Swedes, who in turn show more variation in address choice than the Finnish speakers, highlighting a greater insecurity among Finland-Swedes compared to Finnish speakers as regards choice of address. The article on Western Ukrainian, by Weissenböck, goes beyond established social categories, and demonstrates that the notions of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ upbringing and values can be used to explain address variation. Williams-van Klinken and Hajek show that in the Dili Tetum address system there is considerable variation and change, and that ‘polite’ forms are spreading into new domains as the political and social climate of East Timor evolves. Djenar, examining address usage in contemporary Indonesian fictional narratives, shows that shifts in address pronoun usage can be explained by changes in an individual’s positioning within a conversation. These shifts also reflect the individual’s understanding of the distinct expressive values of the particular address pronouns employed.

Common to all the articles presented is the finding that there is not one simple model that can account for address usage within each language. Rather, address practices show considerable variation, based not only on what could be described as ‘static’ social factors (such as age, status and sex) but also on individuals’ choice of address forms, negotiated within the parameters of the particular communicative situation in which they are engaged. Second, the address systems of all the languages described are in a state of flux. This can be triggered by major political changes, for example, or by a shift from a previously more static society where roles were clearly defined, to one characterised by social mobility and increasing permeability between social groups. In both cases, an area such as address choice can be both empowering and problematic.

All the languages discussed have more than one pronominal address form to express differing degrees of social distance. This clearly contrasts with English with its single form ‘you’. Future directions in address research, could, for example, fruitfully compare how different varieties of English express the social relations discussed in this issue. The global impact of English address patterns is also worth exploring, given that English is fast becoming the *lingua franca* of Europe.

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