

CATRIN NORRBY & CAMILLA WIDE (eds), *Address practice as social action. European perspectives*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. xii, 151. Hardcover \$67.50, eBook \$49.99.

Reviewed by EVA HAVU

University of Helsinki

FI-00140 Helsingin yliopisto, Finland

eva.havu@helsinki.fi

Pronominal and nominal forms of address have been examined from many points of view and in different types of corpora, especially since the publication of Brown and Gilman's article in 1960. Even if certain general principles guide the choice of address strategies in a specific language (for example in many European languages the use of the formal and 'polite' V form when addressing an elder person with whom one has no familiar relations), the final choice depends on multiple issues such as the situation, the medium and the appearance of the addressee, which are more difficult to generalize. All languages examined in the volume make (at least historically) a distinction between formal and informal address strategies (V vs. T), but the rules for applying them are different.

The volume edited by Catrin Norrby and Camilla Wide views address practices as social action in several European languages and intends to "fill a gap in current research by presenting analyses of recorded language usage" (p. 142). It describes some aspects of this usage in the media (radio, film commercials), on the Internet and in service encounters, the only exception being chapter 6 on address practices in Italian which is based on questionnaires describing the interviewees' (Italian University students) own opinion of the usage of these forms, but not necessarily real usage.

Three of the six chapters examine pluricentric languages from a contrastive point of view (Dutch/Flemish, German spoken in Austria/Germany/Switzerland, Finland-Swedish/Sweden-Swedish), chapter 5 compares two linguistically not related languages (Finnish/French) and chapter 6 address strategies in two Italian universities, whereas chapter 3 discusses address in Swedish from

a diachronic perspective. This contrastive/comparative approach in the description of some of the various aspects of linguistic variation can be considered as a link between the chapters. However, the choice of the languages could have been better balanced: Germanic languages are well represented (4 chapters), whereas the two remaining chapters deal with two Romance languages and Finnish. Nevertheless, the six chapters give an interesting survey on certain address practices in less examined contexts (and languages).

As to individual chapters, Roel Vismans discusses in Chapter 1 differences in the use of forms of address between the northern and southern parts of the Dutch-speaking area (Netherlands vs. Flemish speaking Belgium) and their actual usage in three radio interviews between three Dutch journalists and three Flemish academics, as well as interviewers' comments on the interviewees' choice. The forms of address used in the corpus show a slight difference between Dutch and Flemish speakers and the impact of other possible factors on the choice of these forms (topic, female or male interviewer/interviewee...). Unfortunately, the quite scarce usage of address pronouns in this corpus does not allow to present significant overall conclusions, and the possible impact of Dutch on the language use of two of the interviewees having spent several years in the Netherlands at the moment of the interview could have been discussed.

Chapter 2 by Heinz L. Kretzenbacher and Doris Schüpbach analyzes the forms of address in a corpus of readers' forums in online editions of German, Austrian and German-Swiss newspapers. The system of address forms in German shows variation between these three German speaking countries and only few studies have been made on address in German computer-mediated communication. The constitution of the three comparable corpora observes rigorous principles, and although the number of posts and forms of address varies between the countries, the results enable a solid statistical comparison. This excellent chapter points out the somewhat surprising dominance of V in these corpora and shows significant differences between the three countries and individual forums which each have their own characteristics.

In Chapter 3, Maria Fremer discusses the impact of the Swedish ‘du-reform’ (generalization of the use of T) on the address in advertising films and its relation with a general societal tendency towards informality. The corpus gives a diachronic overview from 1915 until the mid-70s when T is the only form of address in use, and the chapter also presents other changes simultaneous with the reform, showing that the generalization of the T form is not an isolated phenomenon. The author intends to focus on how the viewer is addressed in the films, but the group of addressees could have been better defined, since in some of the examples the addressee is not (clearly) the viewer – in examples 12 and 13 it is for example an internal voice. The use of the second formal form of address, ‘title + 3<sup>rd</sup> person’, could also have been discussed in the earlier films, but on the whole, the text gives a good general picture of the change, connecting it with other societal phenomena.

Chapter 4, by Catrin Norrby, Camilla Wide, Jenny Nilsson and Jan Lindström, investigates address practices in service encounters in the two national varieties of Swedish, Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish. Concerning the number and the age of the customers, the well composed chapter presents directly comparable quantitative and qualitative data. As to staff, there is a discrepancy (4 Finns vs. 12 Swedes, most of whom are younger than the Finns), but the fact that the few Finns produce a larger variety of address practices than the Swedes suggests certain differences. Even if address practices have been considered as more formal in Finland Swedish than in Sweden Swedish, the chapter shows that the most important differences lie in the age (between younger and older customers in Sweden and younger and older staff in Finland) and not in the nationality.

In Chapter 5, Johanna Isosävi and Hanna Lappalainen examine the attitudes of Frenchmen and Finns towards the use of first names in the French and Finnish cafés of the American coffee chain Starbucks. Finns seldom use first names (which are always accompanied by T), and their use in service encounters is associated with telemarketing companies or considered as an American practice. In France, first names are more general, even if not in service encounters, and they can be accompanied by either T or V. The corpus consists of three types of data: Internet discussions, field

notes of authentic service situations and interviews of baristas (=waiters) and clients. There is a difference in the number of French and Finnish Internet data, but the ethnographic data are very much comparable. The results show that in both countries the use of first names is considered as American, and it is seen either as positive (practical, personal service...) or negative (foreign influence...). As to differences between cultures, Finns tend to consider the use of first names as too intimate, Frenchmen associate it with marketing. The chapter provides a new point of view on address practices in these two countries and an interesting comparison between the attitudes towards these practices.

Chapter 6 by Maicol Formentelli and John Hajek discusses reported address practices in Italian academic interactions mainly collected by means of questionnaires in two different universities in northern Italy (one small, one medium-size). The students represent three different disciplines (Group A: Modern Foreign Languages, small-size university; group B: Biology, medium-size university; group C: Communication Sciences, medium-size university) and the collected data is both quantitative and qualitative. Additionally, a recording of a formal speech event is used to validate the reported results. However, the results hardly bring new information on the use of (pro)nouns of address (see e.g. Suomela-Härmä 2013): lecturers are newer addressed by T and the T form is far less used than the V form when lecturers address their students (thus, reciprocal use is the norm). Even if T-address (and address by the first name) is clearly more frequent at the small university than at the medium-sized university, one could argue that this is not only due to the size of the university but could also be explained by the discipline (language students often work in smaller groups (e.g. language training, conversation)). Instead of commenting features of generalized language use, the authors could have discussed less studied phenomena (e.g. variation in the use of nominal address, variation between disciplines).

Jane Warren's concluding remarks give a good overview of the volume by pointing out its most significant aspects. The selection of the items appearing in the index at the end of the volume is not

quite obvious, since it includes only part of the terms related with the research on forms of address and mentioned in the chapters (for example ‘negative/positive face’, see chapter 5, does not appear) and part of the mentioned references are missing (for example Suomela-Härmä (e.g. p. 122), Parkinson and Hajek (p. 122), Merrison et al. (p. 120)).

In spite of some minor critics, the volume is a valuable contribution to the research on forms of address.