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### Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems [Review of: A. Jucker, I. Taavitsainen (2003) Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems]

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IRMA TAAVITSAINEN u. ANDREAS H. JUCKER (Hgg.), **Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems**. Amsterdam u. Philadelphia: Benjamins 2003. VII, 441 S. (Pragmatics & Beyond New Series 107)

The book 'Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems' presents fourteen different studies on address form systems in six European languages, namely English, Czech, Finnish, German, Spanish and French. Most of the papers in the volume were first presented in a seminar on historical pragmatics at the ESSE-5 Conference of the European Society for the study of English held in Helsinki in August 2000. The fourteen case studies are preceded by a fairly extensive introduction where the editors introduce the most important concepts in the study of address forms: They sketch a picture of the development of address terms in European languages (including a full page on Swedish and a short mention of Turkish, Dutch, Italian, Russian and Polish) and give an overview of all the papers in the book. The editors admit that the book is biased towards English address systems (p. 3).

A recurring theme in the study of address term systems is pronoun switching, or 'Mischstil' in Ehrismann's (1902) terms: One speaker can address one and the same speaker with both T and V<sup>1</sup>. Thomas Honegger (p. 61) gives an example of pronoun switching by quoting Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale': "And if ye [V; S.A.] wol nat so, my lady sweete, Thanne preye I thee... [T; S.A.]". Horst Simon (chapter 5) shows that although pronoun mixing is impossible in Modern German, pronoun variation was a fundamental characteristic of Middle High German. He uses three of the oldest manuscripts of the 'Nibelungenlied' from among 1200 (roughly contemporary and from the same dialect) to show that Middle High German not only had a retractable address system but that it also showed a great deal of unsystematic pronoun variation among different manuscripts. Simon relates the loss of this variability in pronoun choice to the grammaticalization of the feature 'polite' in Modern German. To illustrate his point that this feature has grammaticalized, Simon gives examples from Bavarian and Standard

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<sup>1</sup> T is derived from French *tu* and functions as a generic marker for the informal pronoun. Its formal counterpart V is derived from French *vous* (Brown & Gilman 1968).

German to show that *Sie* (polite) and *sie* (3<sup>rd</sup> person plural) show distinct grammatical behavior.

Tony Hunt (chapter 3) discusses T/V switches in the Anglo-Norman text 'Seinte Resurreccion' which was composed in 1200. One of the motivations for Hunt to use this text is that it contains stage directions. Curiously enough, however, he does not make use of these stage directions. Hunt argues against the assumption that pronoun switching reflects the free exchangeability of the pronouns. He claims that in this text, the playwright makes "remarkably coherent and consistent use of the *tu-vus* choices open to him" (p. 56). This seems like a valid conclusion, but because Hunt limits himself to discussing individual cases of pronoun switching with ad hoc explanations for the switches without formulating a more general theory, it is impossible to define possible situations that would disprove his conclusion.

Gabriella Mazzon (chapter 10) and Dieter Stein (chapter 11) both discuss pronoun switching in Shakespeare's work. Mazzon considers three works ('King Lear', 'Hamlet' and 'Othello') while Stein studies 'As you like it' and 'King Lear'. Mazzon and Stein have a stronger theoretical background than Hunt has. Mazzon clearly formulates the problem with previous analyses of switching: "they are either extremely specific, discussing pronoun choices in single plays or single scenes only, or disappointingly vague" (p. 226). Her goal is to apply recent notions and categories of pragmatics and sociolinguistics and to "identify [...] trends, trying to avoid both the fragmentation of evidence and the overgeneralisations of [...] previous studies" (p. 241). Stein's subtitle 'Between sociolinguistics and conversation analysis' expresses a similar attitude. Both Stein and Mazzon formulate specific address relationship groups, such as 'address among lovers' or 'address among members of the lower classes without a specific relationship to one another'. For these specific relations they calculate the number of occurrences of T and V pronouns. Trends within such an address relation group reflect the sociolinguistic dimension of the choice of address forms. Individual variation within an address form group reflects pragmatic choices. On the basis of a count of all the address terms within the group of lovers, Stein considers the V pronoun unmarked. Both Mazzon's and Stein's approach is to explain the occurrences of marked T. The clearest example for the use of a T is when Goneril addresses Edmund after she kissed him. Here the T form marks

affection (p. 237, p. 279f). What is remarkable is that Mazzon and Stein disagree with one another in the number of tokens found. Stein's count for example suggests that Goneril addresses Edmund with T five times and with V nine times (p. 279). Mazzon's count suggests that Goneril addresses Edmund with T three times and with V two times (p. 247). It is unclear to me what causes the counting differences. Overall, Stein's and Mazzon's set up is more systematic and theoretical than Hunt's, but I could not distill how the actual analysis benefited from new insights in sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

A topic closely related to pronoun switching is co-occurrence. In her 1972 publication, Ervin-Tripp formulates the intuitively clear hypothesis that there is a correlation between the selection of a nominal and a pronoun. A formal title like *sir* requires a formal address pronoun V and an informal noun like *darling* requires the occurrence of the informal pronoun T. The contributions by Thomas Honegger and Ulrich Busse show that this intuition is not always correct. A crucial term in Honegger's article is 'adversion' (Kohz 1982, p. 16) which refers to "all the linguistic and non-linguistic elements of the act of changing one's approach to a person" (p. 80). Examples of elements of adversion are gaze, pronoun use, choice of nominal address forms, self-humiliation or body language. Honegger believes that in every dyad, there is an appropriate level of distance between the speaker and the hearer. If this distance is too large, it will result in irony whereas too little distance is interpreted as rudeness. It is Honegger's claim that all elements of adversion together create the right level of distance and thus the right level of politeness. Honegger illustrates his claim with examples from Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale'. In one excerpt, Theseus meets Theban women who first address him with V to mark their shared high status. The women beg Theseus to help them, kneel before him and refer to themselves as 'wrecched women'. Intuitively one might expect the women to use the V pronoun again in this situation, because both kneeling and V use are parts of polite behavior. Honegger shows that this expectation is not borne out. While kneeling the women address Theseus with T. According to Honegger, kneeling is an "act of self-humiliation" that creates the "necessary courtly minimum distance" to allow the women to temporarily switch to T (p. 68).

Busse (chapter 9) analyzes the co-occurrence of nominal and pronominal forms of address in all of Shakespeare's dramas (38 plays!). He divides the nominal address forms

into six categories: titles of courtesy ('your grace'), occupation markers ('doctor'), family relationship markers ('mother'), generic forms ('lad'), terms of endearment ('heart'), and terms of abuse ('fool'). He calculates the frequency with which each category combines with *thou* and with *you*. If a nominal frequently combines with *you* and infrequently with *thou*, Busse speaks of a high score of "youfulness" (p. 214). Going back to Ervin-Tripp it is amazing to see that there are hardly any nominals that always co-occur with either *thou* or with *you*. Co-occurrence is almost always gradual. A comparison of 'youfulness' scores between categories shows that terms of endearment most frequently combine with *thou*. Within the category of endearment terms, *bully* has the lowest 'youfulness' score. Within the group of courtesy, the nominals *Liege* and *Monsieur* have extremely high 'youfulness' scores. Considering genre one would expect a low degree of 'youfulness' in comedies because characters in comedies have a lower social background and the use of T is traditionally associated with lower classes. Busse, however, shows that comedies have a much higher degree of 'youfulness' than either histories or tragedies. Busse's work is very thorough and a joy to read; the only drawback of his work is his use of graphs. The graphs are confusing and sometimes even misleading.<sup>2</sup>

An important question in the study of address forms is the choice of data. Many contributions on address forms consider the use of address terms in Shakespeare's or Chaucer's work. The advantage of these objects of investigation is that they contain many address forms and that characters with various social backgrounds, different emotional stages and varying relations are portrayed. If one believes that discoveries about address

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<sup>2</sup> In every section Busse calculates the 'youfulness' of members of one nominal address form category. In the category of courtesy titles we see that the nominal *Liege* is assigned a score of 1431, *Monsieur* has a score of 1279 and *Dame* a score of 222. At first glance, it looks as if the nominal *Liege* combines with *you* most frequently (because it has the highest 'youfulness' score) and *Dame* combines with *you* in the smallest number of cases. The numbers Busse uses are logarithms multiplied by a 1000. A logarithm of +1 indicates that the *you* forms are used ten times more frequently than the *thou* forms, 0 indicates an even ratio and -1 implies *thou* is used 10 times more frequently than *you*. As Busse has very nice graphs with large numbers (all logarithms are multiplied by 1000), it is easy to be fooled about the absolute numbers. If we look at the absolute numbers per category (not available in this book but in Busse 2002), we see that *dame* combines with *you* five times and with *thou* once. *Liege* combines with *thou* twice and with *you* 54 times. *Monsieur* combines with *you* 19 and never with *thou*. The reason that *Liege* has a higher number of *you* than *Monsieur* according to the graph is because logarithms cannot be calculated with  $\emptyset$ . Busse calculated as if *Monsieur* combined with *you* 19 times and with *thou* once. It would have been better if Busse had added 0.5 to all numbers for all nominals instead of adding one hit only to the *thou*-count in *Monsieur*. It should also be taken into account that none of the differences Busse finds within the nominals are statistically significant (which is not surprising because the frequency of some nominals is so low). The difference between categories, however, is statistically significant.

forms in one text type “cannot be generalized easily beyond the data for which they were established” (p. 10), it follows naturally that one would pick letters and drama (and perhaps trials and dispositions) as a study object. These text types provide an abundance of address forms and allow the researcher to discover address form patterns within one single text type. The result of this focus is that texts with a lower frequency of address forms do not receive any attention. A second result is that really diachronic research is excluded. In order to compare development lines in the address system over time, one has to generalize over text types.

Fortunately, there are papers that deal with the question of possible sources for data in an innovative way. The paper by Simon discussed above compares different manuscripts of the ‘Nibelungenlied’. Hunt refers to work by Patricia Mason on a comparison of the original French text of the ‘Roman de la Rose’ and its English translation (p. 48).

Minna Nevala (chapter 7) uses the corpus of early English correspondence to study address and subscription formulae in English letters. She successfully uses the notion of ‘positive’ and ‘negative politeness’ (Brown & Levinson 1987) as a tool to trace diachronic developments.<sup>3</sup> The central finding from her article is that from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increase in ‘positive politeness’. Positive polite forms such as *dearest brother* replaced negative polite address formulae such as *right worshipful brother*. Nevala also shows that the use of formulae decreased over time and that the length of subscriptions shortened.

Michael Betsch (chapter 6) gives a survey of the development of Czech bound forms of address from the 14<sup>th</sup> till the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His sources are mostly private letters but also medieval literature. Within three centuries, Czech developed five new bound address forms: *vy* (instead of singular *ty*), *Tvá Milost* and *Vaše Milost* (‘Your grace’) and *pan* and *pani* (‘lord(s)’). Betsch relates the development of address forms in Czech to

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Positive politeness’ and ‘negative politeness’ are terms introduced by Brown & Levinson (1987). They assume that every human being has two basic needs: One is to feel liked and approved of by others and to feel connected to fellow humans. The other need is not be hindered in one’s actions. Positive politeness strategies are geared towards the first need, negative politeness strategies to the latter. The expression ‘I love the way you rearranged your garden... I would really appreciate it if you helped me with mine’ is an example of a positive politeness strategy; the expression ‘I am sorry to bother you, but could you possibly help me with my garden?’ is an example of a negative politeness strategy.

language contact situations with German and he contrasts the Czech situation with developments in other Slavic languages.

David Burnley's contribution (chapter 2) is traditional in the sense that he interprets pronoun variation between manuscripts solely as a scribe problem. What makes his contribution interesting is that he stresses the importance of knowledge of the co-text and the social context in order to fully appreciate the meaning of a T or V pronoun in a given text. Burnley illustrates the influence of the social context by showing reflections on address form use by fourteenth and fifteenth century authors. Whereas some medieval authors insist on the use of V, others opposed its use "based on religious disapproval of worldly self-aggrandisement" (p. 36). At the end of the fourteenth century, humanists adopted the use of T. T use did not mark humility in this case; instead, it was a group marker reflecting classical Latin literacy (classical Latin did not have polite V). It would be interesting to compare reflections on address forms in different language communities and see if these reflections mirror developments in the address term system of that language community. Possible other new sources of information on address term systems are foreign language study books (cf. Langer 2002).

Paola Bentivoglio (chapter 8) studies the use of address terms in letters from Andalusian immigrants in the Americas who write to their families in Spain. She analyzes 52 letters (taken from a corpus of 600 letters) written between 1556 and 1599 and claims that the style of the letters closely approximates spoken language. One important result of her studies is that most of the writers still use the pronoun *vos*. According to previous research (based on literary works from the higher class), this form had disappeared in the fifteenth century.

Raymond Hickey (chapters 13 and 15) contributes to this volume twice. His first paper discusses the loss of number distinction for the second person pronouns in English and the rise of new plural forms such as *youse*, *yins*, *y'all*, *yupela* ('you fellows'). Hickey considers the situation in Ireland, the southern United States, the Caribbean, South Africa and Australia. He is most thorough in his investigations of Irish English since he has the Corpus of Irish English at his disposal. Hickey's paper is very clearly written and gives a good overview of existing second person plural forms in English and on literature on these forms (p. 365). One critical note is that Hickey considers second language

acquisition (the transfer of the second person plural feature) to be one of the sources for the development of new plural pronouns without any evidence that second language learners ever use such a strategy. Another small point of concern is that English is not the only Germanic language that has lost its T form (*pace* Hickey, p. 344). Dutch, too, has lost its original second person singular form (*du*) and, as in English, the old V form (*gij/jij*) is now used in the singular. This change is less obvious than in English because Dutch has a new plural form (*jullie*) and a new polite form (*u*) (cf. Aalberse 2004).

Hickey's second paper looks at address forms in contemporary German. It reads almost like a guide for non-native speakers of German to help them with their use and interpretation of German address forms. The paper is detailed and even discusses phenomena like 'Oberstufen-*Sie*' and 'Karnevals-*Du*'. The most interesting part of the paper is section 6 where Hickey discusses pragmatic manipulation of formality. All elements of address except T/V pronouns are considered parafeatures that can reduce or increase the amount of formality. Hickey asserts that the formal meaning of *Sie* can be reduced by combining *Sie* with a first name or with a phonetically reduced form of *du*. This assertion seems to contrast with Simon's hypothesis (chapter 5) that *Sie* has grammaticalized and that pronoun mixing is therefore no longer possible. The problem with Hickey's contribution is that his observations are impressionistic. We do not know if a native speaker of German has actually ever said "Weisste, die ganze Geschichte is dumm gelaufen" in combination with addressing that person with *Sie* like Hickey claims (p. 416).

Two papers excel in innovative approaches to data research: the contributions by Eeva-Leena Seppänen (chapter 14) and by Terry Walker (chapter 12). Walker draws her material from the computerized Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760 (CED) that is currently under compilation in Lancaster and Uppsala universities. The corpus includes six text-types: trial proceedings, depositions, drama, handbooks in dialogue form, prose fiction and language teaching books. Walker selects two time periods from this corpus, namely 1560-1600 and 1680-1720. Per time period, she looks at *thou*-use in constructed dialogues (comedies and handbooks) compared to *thou*-use in authentic dialogues (trials and depositions). As expected, *thou*-use decreases over time. But *thou* use decreases least in trials. Trials consist of formulaic use in the opening and closing stages of the trial, i.e.

“how wilt thou be tried” and “thou hast been found guilty”. *Thou* is also used to reflect the speaker’s superior status and to express contempt. Walker shows that it is precisely this expressive *thou* that is most persistent in texts across time. In one trial, there is an unusually long attack on a witness by a judge. If this attack is included in the sample we even see a small increase in *thou* use over time. In the second part of her paper Walker studies the effect of gender on pronoun choice and concludes that the gender of the speaker/addressee clearly plays a role in the choice of the pronoun. Men are more likely to use a *thou* form than females, especially while addressing another male (p. 339).

Seppänen compares 19<sup>th</sup> century Finnish dialect studies on the use of the third person pronoun used as a form of address with studies from the 1950s and 1980s (including video-material). The 19<sup>th</sup> century studies show variation in the interpretation of address constructions like *tää Tuomas* (‘this Thomas’). Some authors consider the form polite, others jocular or sarcastic. On the basis of a situational analysis of the 1980 material, Seppänen suggests that factors like the amount of people present in a conversation and the extent of active participation of the addressee give meaning to the combination of demonstrative pronoun and noun. She uses these results from modern data to reinterpret the 19<sup>th</sup> century data and asserts that different interpretations from 19<sup>th</sup> century data are caused by the different social situations in which the forms were described.

Seppänen’s paper brings up a more general issue. In many papers on address term systems from earlier language stages, claims are made about modern day address systems without any substantial support. Modern address systems, for example, are claimed to be non-retractable. It would be interesting to study corpora of modern spoken languages to investigate if T and V are really not mixed. Studies from Vermaas (2002) on Dutch show that modern Dutch address forms can be mixed. The general intuition, however, is that mixing is impossible and wrong. A second recurring thought is that the existence of variation in address term use in different manuscripts of one text suggest that the system is not yet stabilized, implying that there is such a thing as a ‘stabilized address system’ and, moreover, that most modern address term systems are stabilized. If this were true, one would expect native speakers of present day European languages not to make copying mistakes in pronouns if they were asked to copy a large piece of text.

Another discussion point is that the book appeared in a series on pragmatics and was edited by researchers with an historical pragmatics background. A potential threat of this outlook (not exhibited in ‘Diachronic Perspectives’) is that more formal factors are overlooked. Simon makes it clear in his contribution that grammaticalization of the feature ‘polite’ possibly influences retractability. Other formal factors that involve address forms are the process of pronominalization of nominal forms (e.g. the Spanish title *vuestra merced* ‘your grace’ becomes the pronoun *usted*), the reanalysis of unstressed address forms into indefinite pronouns and the effect of reorganization of the address term system on the organization of possessives, reflexives and verbal inflection. In Hunt’s paper, it is mentioned that French T and V could often not be formally distinguished from one another (p. 49). I would like to know when and how T and V formally grew apart so they could be distinguished.

The focus of ‘Diachronic Perspectives’ is on English address forms. This focus is understandable given the background of the volume, but contributions on the history of Czech (Betsch) and German (Hickey, Simon) show how many changes can occur in address forms in a short period of time. It would be interesting to be able to compare the diachronic development of address forms in more languages. Basic questions to answer for each language are the origin of address forms in the specific language, what is known about the motivation for changes in the address term system, whether changes in the address system reflect the universal hierarchy in politeness forms (cf. Head 1978, Simon), the role of language contact in changes in the address term system, how changes in the address term system affect the grammar, whether politeness is grammaticalized, whether there is evidence of retractability and whether sentence-internal mixing of pronouns was ever possible.

In conclusion I would like to say that ‘Diachronic Perspectives’ is a real asset to the study of address forms. Many different perspectives are brought together and the introduction provides a comprehensive and clear introduction to the field. The editors put effort into relating papers to each other both by describing general issues in their introduction as well as by adding cross-references to papers with the same topic. They give a clear overview of recurring themes such as motivations in the choice of primary sources and the interpretation of pronoun switching, retractable address systems and

norm deviation. The book also reveals problematic issues in address term research such as the issue of possible generalizations on data research.

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