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Towards a linguistic typology of address pronouns in Europe – past and present

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The appropriate choice of address pronouns is an essential pragmatic practice that governs interpersonal relations across much of Europe although it remains unknown to date for how many European languages this is the case. This paper reports on issues in address in European languages and on a pilot typological survey currently under way of address pronouns in Europe, focusing on not only identifying the forms used, but also their pragmatic use, historical sources and change, shared features across areo-genetic space, and their synchronic grammatical properties. We discuss specific aspects and data relevant to these issues to highlight the potential complexity of European address pronoun systems. Initial results presented here suggest that our typological approach is also useful in identifying subtle areal phenomena - exemplified here by what we call a 'submerged' pattern of address through language contact, i.e. the spread of 3rd person plural for singular address, calqued on German Sie (3pl)*.*

1. Address pronouns in European languages and address research since 1960

The way people address one another, including peripheral and related phenomena such as greetings and introductions, features prominently in establishing and maintaining social relationships by linguistic means. The choice of address form is a way of positioning both speaker and addressee in their mutual social field of interaction (cf. Carbaugh 1996: 143; Svennevig 1999: 19), thus marking a specific social distance between the interlocutors.

1.1 Address research since 1960

More than fifty years ago, the publication of Brown and Gilman's "The pronouns of power and solidarity" (1960) proved seminal for our understanding of address pronoun use. It set the tone for much of the subsequent sociolinguistic research on address, with its focus both on a small number of Western European languages and on pronominal and deictic address (rather than nominal address and vocatives), and its formulation of a well-known analytical model. Brown and

Gilman's rather simplistic dichotomy of "power" vs. "solidarity semantics", along with the equally simplistic equation of "formal" V pronouns (such as French *vous* or German *Sie*) with "power" and of "informal" T pronouns (such as French *tu* or German *du*) with "solidarity" has been superseded by alternative models, such as recent ones by Clyne, Norrby & Warren (2009), Kretzenbacher (2010) and Parkinson and Hajek (2004). These were all developed as part of the Melbourne Address Project (MAP, see section 2 for more detail), based on data collected over several years for five languages in seven European countries. However, a disproportionally large number of address studies are still concentrated on a small number of Western European languages, above all languages with (at least at first glance) simple T/V oppositions in their pronominal address systems, such as French, German and Peninsular Spanish. While there is much metalinguistic discussion about address among non-linguists (cf. Kretzenbacher 2011a for German; some examples for French in Williams & van Compernolle 2009), our knowledge of the grammaticalisation of mutual social positioning of interlocutors remains limited. In particular, how different linguistic communities arrive at and deal with specific forms of address for particular communicative situations still requires significant investigation.

This is where the current pilot project, intended to be the first step in a new phase in the Melbourne Address Project (MAP), aims to make inroads. Starting with pronominal address, the larger project is ultimately focussed on giving a more developed overview and understanding of the ways of social positioning through address across European languages - in both pragmatic and grammatical terms, and across time and space.

1.2 Pronominal address in context

In descriptions of the address systems of individual languages, pronominal address is often seen as one side of a dichotomy of pronominal vs. nominal address and as linked to another dichotomy of deictic vs. vocative function of address. This approach works reasonably well in languages such as German and English (although there are functions of address, in this case vocatives, that can be fulfilled by the pronoun in German, but in some cases only by a noun in English, as underlined in Table 1 below):

Table 1 Pronominal and nominal address, deixis and vocative in German and English

	pronominal	nominal
deixis	*Haben **Sie** schon das Neueste gehört?* Have **you** heard the latest news yet? ***Du** bist wirklich Gold wert!* **You** are really worth your weight in gold!	*Hat es **dem Herrn** geschmeckt?* Did **Sir** enjoy his meal?
vocative	*Das tut mir jetzt echt leid, **du**!* I'm really sorry, **man**! *He, **Sie**!* Hey, **you**!	*Guten Morgen, **Frau Meier**!* Good morning, **Ms. Meier**!

But even within European languages, those simple dichotomies are not unproblematic. European Portuguese is a case in point. As it is a pro-drop language, address forms do not need a pronoun. Moreover, speakers of this language are presented with a wide range of address options, as apparent from the following examples, which amongst other things highlight the transition from simplest informal (and verb focussed) address in (1a) to the most formal in (1i):

(1a)	*Queres uma laranja?* vb 2sg	"Do you want an orange?"
(1b)	*Tu queres uma laranja?* T pronoun + vb 2sg (already with a hint of the vocative)	"Do you want an orange?"
(1c)	*Ó João, queres uma laranja?* vocative + 1st name + vb 2sg	"John, do you want an orange?"
(1d)	*Quer uma laranja?* vb 3sg	"Do you want an orange?"
(1e)	*Você quer uma laranja?* V pronoun + vb 3sg	"Do you want an orange?"
(1f)	*O senhor quer uma laranja?* def art + nom honorific + vb 3sg	"Do you want an orange?/Does sir want an orange?"
(1g)	*O senhor Guedes quer uma laranja?* def art + nom honorific + vb 3sg	"Do you want an orange?/Does Mr Guedes want an orange?"
(1h)	*Ó senhor Guedes, quer uma laranja?* voc + nom honorific + vb 3sg	"Mr Guedes, do you want an orange?"
(1i)	*Ó senhor professor, quer uma laranja?* voc + nom honorific + title + vb 3sg	"Professor, do you want an orange?"

A comparison of the Portuguese examples and their translations in English shows that pronominal address can no longer be neatly boxed as a clearly distinct category within a dichotomy with nominal address. It can also appear as a relative position on two sliding scales from verbal (given pro-drop) to nominal address on the one hand and from deictic to vocative address on the other hand. Furthermore, the boundaries between pronominal and nominal address appear fuzzy, as shown by the overlapping status of *o senhor* (as 'you' and 'sir/Mr.') seen especially in (1f) and confirmed by discussion in Portuguese linguistics (see, e.g. Hammermüller 1993, Carreira 2009: 31-33). This synchronic merging of the categories of nominal and pronominal address reflects a diachronic move from the nominal towards the pronominal (and verbal) end of the address form scale in Portuguese and in many other European languages (see section 3.2 for further examples). What needs to be kept in mind is that address pronouns are not always the clear-cut category they are often presented as in address research - whether from a diachronic or a synchronic point of view.

2. The Melbourne Address Pronoun European Typology (MAPET) project

The current pilot project reported on here is the first step towards a planned Melbourne Address Pronoun European Typology (MAPET) project which, as previously noted is intended to be a new phase in the original Melbourne Address Project (MAP). MAPET, when fully activated, aims to be the most detailed and inclusive typological survey and analysis so far of address pronouns across European languages – from Iceland to the Caucasus. It focuses on identifying not only the forms used, but also their pragmatic use, historical sources, shared features across areo-genetic space, regional and individual variation and their synchronic grammatical properties. The first concrete outcome of MAPET involves this current pilot project and the data and results we have been able to collect and analyse so far. The full survey, when it commences in the future, is intended to be much larger in scale (in terms of languages and dialects) and greater in detail than any previous survey of address pronouns in Europe (e.g. Helmbrecht 2006, 2011), with the expectation that it will provide valuable new typological data for address research, and improve our understanding of address phenonema in Europe. At this early stage we report on some initial results of our pilot research - for specific languages, and more generally - in the sections that follow.

According to the current estimates (see, e.g. *Ethnologue* [Lewis 2009]), more than 200 languages (not including the many more dialects) are spoken in Europe today, with a large proportion in the former Soviet Union. While European

languages are the best studied in the world, a typological survey of address forms of the kind we envisage - starting with the pronouns and then expanding into nominal and vocative address - remains a significant omission in our knowledge. Indeed, even based on our limited initial surveying, there is little or no information for a surprising number of languages about the pronouns used and how they might be used to mark address.

In addition to knowing when and how to use each pronoun appropriately from a pragmatic perspective (for example which pronoun to use to a much older unknown stranger or to a grandparent), we are also interested, amongst other things, in the collection of basic grammatical information, e.g. with regard to referent agreement patterns between the pronoun and other parts of speech (see section 3.1 for further detail and exemplification).

Even where address pronoun systems are identified in grammars for specific languages, detail is often lacking: agreement questions beyond pronoun-verb agreement are often neglected or forms of address pronouns that are typical for non-standard varieties of a language or for non-dominant varieties of pluricentric languages are overlooked. We also seek to establish the possible sources of address pronoun systems in Europe, since the existence of a formal/informal pronoun dichotomy, or more complex systems, is historically relatively recent, at least in Indo-European languages.

This new project is also a logical new phase in the work of the Melbourne Address Project (MAP, referred to in section 1.1 above) housed since 2003 within RUMACCC (Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-cultural Communication) at the University of Melbourne. MAP's initial focus was on intracultural aspects of address in five European languages, English, French, German, Italian and Swedish as spoken in seven countries, with a special interest in address variation in pluricentric languages. More recently its attention has turned to intercultural address in Europe (e.g. Schüpbach et al 2007). MAP has been very productive with a substantial number of publications to date, and, as noted previously, the development of new alternative models of address (e.g. Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009, Kretzenbacher 2010, Parkinson & Hajek 2004).

The initial data sources for the new MAPET project are: (1) the existing research literature on address in European languages; (2) information on pronominal address in grammatical descriptions of an initial small sample of languages; and (3) our own knowledge of and data for some languages, e.g. German, Italian, and Portuguese. The long-term intention, as already noted, is to survey as many languages (and varieties) as possible, with concomitant expansion of data collection for individual languages.

We also wish to contribute to the existing literature on address in European languages. Two main types of research approach have been used. First, as already noted, studies have often focused on one among the few well-researched mostly Western European languages such as German, French, Spanish or Dutch, although very few of those publications have the depth of diachronic and synchronic analysis provided, for instance, in the study conducted by Simon (2003) for German. Second, a small number of comparative studies have been undertaken of pronominal address across languages in parts of Europe and elsewhere, e.g. Winter (1984), Braun (1988) and Helmbrecht (2006, 2011). While both approaches are useful, we aim to steer a middle course between the two: the first approach (following Simon 2003) is not feasible given the size of our language sample and the comparative approach has not to date provided the detail envisioned in our typological approach.

3. Forms of the new project: example phenomena

A critical initial step in our project is the location of source material, e.g. grammars and prior studies specifically on address. This allows us, first, to identify possible address pronoun distinctions for each European language (and any sub-variety), and, second, to gather any pragmatic rules about the operation of any such distinction, where such information is provided. But as already noted, there are other important issues to be investigated as part of our typological survey. In the remainder of this paper, we outline and exemplify some such issues which, so far and in our view, have been neglected and/or under-researched. These include potential problems with reference and agreement, changes in address systems over time and their implications and the role of language contact and areal diffusion in changing address systems.

3.1 Reference and agreement problems

The movement away from the deictically "correct" second person singular for the address of a single interlocutor increases indirectness (a reduction of deictic imposition and thus a negative face strategy in the terms of politeness research, Brown & Levinson 1987). Within verbal address, this movement can be a shift in number from second person singular to second person plural such as French *tu* (2sg) > *vous* (2pl), a shift in person from second person singular to third person singular such as Portuguese *tu* (2sg) > *você* (3sg), or even a shift in both number and person such as the German *du* (2sg) > *Sie* (3pl). Such pragmatically motivated shifts - mixing up deictic and grammatical person and number - can have consequences for referential clarity, and languages can develop different

strategies to deal with these consequences. In Portuguese, for example, the third person singular possessive *seu/sua* could refer either to the formally addressed interlocutor or literally to a third person outside the communicative dyad of speaker and addressee. In order to distinguish between the two, reference to a third person is often expressed as the combination of the preposition *de* and the third person pronoun *ele/ela* (which is never used for address), as in (2b):

(2a) *o seu marido / a sua mulher*
"your [V] husband / your [V] wife" OR "her husband / his wife"

(2b) *o marido dela / a mulher dele*
"her husband / his wife"

In a language such as modern English which has lost the signals for second person singular in both verb inflection and the pronominal system, the difference between singular and plural is often re-established with colloquial and regional plural forms of the pronoun such as *youse* or *y'all* (cf. Hickey 2003), or by the addition of plural nouns to the pronoun such as *you guys* or by plural nouns as vocatives such as *folks*. This is a particular issue in computer mediated communication in English where it is often not clear from the situation whether an utterance is addressed to a single addressee or to multiple addressees (cf. Anglemark 2006; Heyd 2010).

Patterns of number, person and gender agreement in address are also an important issue across European languages but have previously only been examined in any detail for a small number of languages, mainly Slavonic (e.g. Comrie 1975, Corbett 1983). In a language such as Italian which, depending on the variety and context, has up to four pronouns for addressing a single interlocutor (*tu* [T] *Voi* [V] *Lei* [V] *Ella* [V] plus two for addressing multiple interlocutors *voi* [T] *Loro* [V]), we find that agreement patterns with the shifted V pronouns in singular address can vary. The formal pronoun *Voi* is grammatically the second person plural. When it is the subject of a sentence, the finite verb always agrees in number. But all other elements and structures, fail to agree with *Voi* when the addressee is one person. Instead, they normally agree in terms of gender and number with the semantic referent, as shown in Table 2 for a female addressee. Exceptionally however, in the case of the preposed direct object pronoun, number agreement with the single female referent is normal but gender agreement is optional.

Table 2 The Italian V address pronoun *Voi* in the singular (addressing a woman)

person and number form	syntactic combination	example	agreement
2pl	Verb, e.g. You eat	Voi mangiate	2pl
2pl	Noun, e.g. You are a friend	Voi siete amica	sg + f
2pl	Participle, e.g. You have gone	Voi siete andata	sg + f
2pl	Predicative adjective, e.g. You are tired	Voi siete stanca	sg + f
2pl	Preposed adj, e.g. Poor you! Postposed adj, e.g.: You alone!	Povera Voi! Voi sola!	sg + f
2pl	Preposed direct object pronoun, e.g. Madam, I saw you yesterday	Signora, vi ho visto/vista ieri	sg (m/f optional)

The situation is slightly different for *Lei,* the most common V form today:

Table 3 The Italian V address pronoun *Lei* in the singular (addressing a man)

person and number form	syntactic combination (here always m.sg)	example	agreement
3sg	Verb, e.g. You eat	Lei mangia	3sg
3sg	Noun, e.g. You are a friend	Lei è amico	sg + m
3sg	Participle, e.g. You have gone	Lei è andato	sg + m
3sg	Predicative adjective, e.g. You are tired	Lei è stanco	sg + m
3sg	Preposed adj, e.g. Poor you! Postposed adj, e.g. You alone!	Povero Lei! Lei solo!	sg + m
3sg	Preposed direct object pronoun, e.g. Doctor, I saw you yesterday	Dottore, L'ho vista ieri	sg + f

Lei is grammatically the third person feminine singular pronoun 'she', but with male addressees, gender agreement with the semantic referent takes place in most cases - except for the preposed direct object pronoun, as seen in the final example in Table 3 where the referent *Dottore* "Doctor" is necessarily a male but gender is marked as feminine on the past participle 'vista' (f.sg).

The Dutch V address pronoun *u* is also interesting with respect to agreement issues. Originally developed out of a shortened form of the possessive article in noun phrases such as *uwe edelheid* "your nobility", the verb agreement used to require third person singular ending (agreement with the dropped noun in the phrase): *u heeft* (3sg) 'you have'. As a result of a shift to semantic agreement, however, most Dutch speakers would now use the verb in the second person singular *u hebt*, although both forms are still considered correct.

3.2 Changes in address systems over time and space

Historically, many address pronouns that are grammatically third person are derived from noun phrases. This process can occur in the following ways: (a) by contraction of a particular noun phrase, such as the Portuguese polite form *você* from *vossa mercê* 'your grace';[1] or (b) through pronominal replacement of a fixed possessive article + noun address form, such as the Dutch V pronoun *u* mentioned above, or the feminine singular Italian V pronoun *Lei*, standing for *Vostra Grazia* ('your grace' and other similar locutions, e.g. *Vostra Eminenza* 'your eminence'). It eventually replaced the second person plural V address (which is still visible in the possessive articles of the original noun phrases, i.e. 'Vostra') by the third person singular presented by the pronouns standing for the respective nouns of those phrases.

This shift from nominal to pronominal address and from second to grammatical third person happened from the 15th century in Portuguese and Castilian Spanish, but was much more recent in neighbouring Catalan. From the late 17th century on, a similar development happened with German V address, except that the noun in the polite address noun phrase *Euer Gnaden* "Your Grace", just as in other similar address phrases, was and is in fact a plural noun (lit. "graces") and consequently, the pronoun replacing it was the third person plural pronoun *Sie* "they". This movement from full noun phrase to pronoun took its time in German, and has led to some unexpected consequences. In some service contexts one can still hear utterances with grammatical agreement mismatch whereby the nominal address term is in the singular to reflect the single

[1] Cf. other Iberoromance languages: Spanish *usted* from *vuestra merced*, Catalan *vosté* from *vostra mercè* 'your grace'.

addressee but the verb is in the polite plural to reflect formality/politeness even beyond the use of a formal nominal (cf. Findreng 1988; Simon 2007):

(3) Haben (3pl) der Herr (3sg) noch einen Wunsch?
"Does sir want anything else?"

Far from being the solid and defined structures that they might appear to be in a grammatical description of a language, address pronoun systems and the rules governing them are in constant movement. They adapt to the degree of specificity and to any change in marking social distance between interlocutors that linguistic communities and individuals feel they need at a given point in time or context. This flux may also result in two or more different systems or their remnants co-existing in some languages. The previously cited Dutch *u* with its two different verb agreements is one example, as well as the competing Catalan V pronouns 2pl *vós* and 3sg *vosté* (cf. Urteaga 2008: 51). In addition, different regional and national varieties of a language frequently have rather different uses of address pronouns or even different pronouns altogether. In Italian, we have so far identified at least six coexisting systems in the singular, according to regional and social variety and context:

(4a) *tu*
(4b) *tu* - *voi*
(4c) *tu* - *Lei*
(4d) *tu* - *Lei* - *voi*
(4e) *tu* - *Lei* – *Lui* - *voi*
(4f) *tu* – *Lei* – *voi* – *ella*.

The binary *tu* - *Lei* system in (4c) is the one usually taught to foreigners, and is the most widespread in Italy today. However, evidence of all other systems can easily be found today for at least some speakers. Most grammatical descriptions of standard Italian (e.g. Kinder & Savini 2004) recognise the presence of *Voi* (4d, 4f) and even of ultra-formal and antiquated *Ella* (4f), while southern (4a), (4b) and northern (4e) are today clearly regionally marked, and for most Italians considered to be non-standard. As it turns out, many Italian speakers manage more than one of the listed address systems at the same time. The challenge is to find out when and in what circumstances they do so.

This less than neat picture of address systems, true not just for Italian but also for other European languages, is often avoided by grammars which may say nothing about variation or simply declare particular forms or usages obsolete, regional or rural. It is nevertheless clearly an important empirical issue to be

investigated, especially given the potential implications for the modelling of address processes. The previous Melbourne Address Project (MAP), for instance, examined in detail, and with considerable success, the question of address usage and variation in regional and national varieties of German and Swedish (cf. Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009, Clyne & Norrby 2011, Kretzenbacher 2011b; Norrby & Kretzenbacher in press). As part of this new pilot phase of address research, we have already uncovered traces of overlooked pronominal use, such as remnants of plural *vos* in singular address (a phenomenon known as *voseo*) on the Iberian Peninsula or greater than expected areal resilience of the second person plural address pronoun *Ihr* for singular address in German-speaking Europe.

3.3 Language contact and address pronouns: identifying areal phenomena

We are also interested in investigating the extent to which changes to or variation in address pronoun systems and use may be the result of language contact in Europe. In some cases, language contact is highly plausible as a source for address pronoun variation, such as the more widespread use of the V pronoun *ni* in Finland Swedish as opposed to Sweden Swedish, where use of T *du* is strongly preferred. In the latter case, *ni* has almost completely disappeared given its negative connotations as a historically asymmetrical downward address form., However, it remains more widely used in Finland Swedish at least partially owing to the influence of the undamaged address distinction between *sinä* (T) and *te* (V) in Finnish (cf. Norrby 2006; Nyblom 2006). Other examples of contact effects - little researched so far - include Castilian influence on the recent preference of the third person singular V address pronoun *vosté* over the older second person plural V pronoun *vós* in Catalan (cf. Pérez, Turney, Montesinos & Montero 2001: 490-492) and the influence of French *vous* on the Breton V address pronoun *c'hwi* (2pl). Hardly anything appears to have been published on consequences of language contact with Russian for the address systems of neighbouring languages. Only sparse anecdotal reports exist, such as the occasional use of *kün* (2pl) for polite address of single interlocutors in Lezgian, a language spoken in Dagestan and northern Azerbaijan. The structure seems to have developed under influence from the Russian V address pronoun *vy* (2pl) (Haspelmath 1993: 184).

One early result of our pilot study is the uncovering of a largely submerged and now fading areal phenomenon involving the diffusion of the grammatical third person plural (lit. 'they') as a formal V address form (see also discussion in section 3.2). It is in origin a rather specific German development where *Sie* (3pl) increasingly replaced *Ihr* (2pl) or *Er/Sie* (3sg m/f) from the 18th century onwards, and whose diachronic rise has been well researched (e.g. Listen 1999;

Simon 2003; 2007). In its calqued form it has spread to the north and the east of the German-speaking area. To the north it was borrowed by Danish and then by Norwegian (via Danish), but since the 1960s it has been largely replaced in both languages by the T pronoun *du* as more or less sole address pronoun (Kretzenbacher, Hajek, Lagerberg & Bresin 2013a). Interesting, and barely noticed, in respect to both language contact and conflict is the diffusion of German *Sie* into neighbouring Slavonic languages to the east from the 18th century onwards (a phenomenon known respectively as Slovak *onikanie*, Czech *onikání,* and Slovene *onikanje)*, with the introduction of the pronoun *oni* (3pl) for singular address alongside existing *ti/ty* – *vi/vy* T/V systems.[2] In Slovene, for instance, a graded system resulted with second person singular address *ti* (informal *tikanje*) –*vi* (grammatically 2pl; formal *vikanje*) –*oni* (grammatically 3pl; ultra-formal *onikanje*). In the developing Slavonic nationalisms of the 19th and early 20th centuries, *onikanje* and related forms were clearly recognized as German and thus often discouraged in favour of "truly Slavonic" V address forms by contemporary grammarians of all three languages. Ultimately, the rise of *onikanje* was stalled and today in Slovene, like the respective third person plural address forms in Slovak and Czech, it is largely rejected as archaic, dialectal or excessively formal, although synchronic traces of it can still be found nevertheless, for example, its possible use by waiters.

There is very little empirical research on the contemporary use of *oni* as an address form in Slavonic languages, with rare exceptions, e.g. Sedláková (2011) for Slovak and Reindl (2007) for Slovene. However, while we have not as yet been able to delimit the geographical zone of its areal diffusion, we have found traces of this phenomenon elsewhere in the Slavonic speaking world, i.e. in specific varieties bordering the German-speaking area, such as Silesian dialects of Polish (cf. Heine & Kuteva 2005: 93) or Burgenland Croatian in Austria (cf. Houtzagers 2012). Future research on the use of *oni* as a V address form will undoubtedly uncover other such examples, and give us a clearer idea of the development and characteristics of third person address in Slavonic languages.[3]

4. Conclusion

Initial efforts of our pilot MAPET survey of pronominal address in Europe highlight the level of complexity involved in address systems - across languages, time and space - as well as the importance of locating and bringing together data

[2] For Slovene, cf. Reindl 2007 and Lipavic Oštir 2010, for Slovak Grzega & Štekauer 2008 and for Czech Betsch 2000.

[3] A preliminary study focusing on Czech is Kretzenbacher, Hajek, Lagerberg & Bresin 2013b.

across a range of pragmatic and grammatical issues. First results are useful but also point to the challenge, for instance, of delimiting the boundary between pronominal and nominal address terms, of identifying semantic/syntactic complexities in agreement processes, and of observing areal address phenomena. Matters are compounded by the lack of source material for many languages and language varieties across Europe. This project, however, will allow us to establish where precisely and to what extent gaps exist. In that way, we hope that our project will also generate much needed new research on address systems and related issues, particularly in as yet less researched European languages.

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