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Title:

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Date:

2015

Citation:

Norrby, C., Wide, C., Nilsson, J. & Lindström, J. (2015). Address and Interpersonal Relationships in Finland-Swedish and Sweden-Swedish Service Encounters. Norrby, C (Ed.). Wide, C (Ed.). Address Practice As Social Action: European Perspectives, Address Practice as Social Action. European Perspectives, (1), pp.75-96. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/57387>

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Address and Interpersonal Relationships in Finland–Swedish and Sweden–Swedish Service Encounters

Catrin Norrby, Camilla Wide, Jenny Nilsson and Jan Lindström

Abstract: *The chapter investigates address practices in 318 audio- and video-recorded service encounters at theatre box offices and other booking venues equally distributed across the two national varieties of Swedish, Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish. The results demonstrate compelling variation in address choices, which can be linked to participant roles (customer-staff), generation (below and above 50 years) and national variety. Overall informal address with T (du) is the most common address form in both varieties and is particularly salient among older customers in Sweden. There are few occurrences of V address in the data, and most are found among younger Finland-Swedish staff.*

Key words: Finland Swedish; Sweden Swedish; pluricentric language; service encounters; address pronouns

Norrby, Catrin, and Camilla Wide, eds. *Address Practice As Social Action: European Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. DOI: 10.1057/9781137529923.0010.

1 Introduction

Many of our daily interactions consist of brief encounters between a service provider and a customer who carry out a goal-oriented transaction. Typically, such interactions take place between strangers who jointly need to complete a task and where it is crucial to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships throughout the transaction; for example, by means of address choice. This chapter focuses on address practices in naturally occurring service encounters at theatre box offices and similar in the two national varieties of Swedish: Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish.

Previous research on Swedish as a pluricentric language, that is a language with more than one national centre (Clyne, 1992), has largely focused on how the non-dominant variety, Finland Swedish, differs from the dominant variety, Sweden Swedish, in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax (Reuter, 1992; Wide and Lyngfelt, 2009). However, differences in pragmatic routines and interactional patterns, such as address practices, have attracted much less research interest to date, with the exception of a few small-scale interactional studies (Saari, 1995; Fremer, 1996). While informal address patterns dominate in both Swedish national varieties, formal address has been reported to occur more frequently in Finland Swedish (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 132–9). Service encounters provide a good basis for exploring potential national differences in actual address usage as they typically involve brief interactions between strangers, a context where more formal address can be expected to occur.

The data for this study were collected for the bi-national research programme *Interaction and variation in pluricentric languages. Communicative patterns in Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish*. This research programme aims to contribute to the body of work on pluricentric languages by comparing pragmatic and interactional patterns in institutional contexts, in the domains of service, higher education and healthcare in the national varieties of Swedish.¹ To our knowledge, this is the first large-scale comparison of pragmatic and interactional patterns in different varieties of pluricentric languages in general. Furthermore, it provides the first systematic comparison between Finland-Swedish and Sweden-Swedish interactions based on a large corpus of authentic face-to-face conversations.

The chapter is organized as follows. In section 2 we give a background on Swedish as a pluricentric language and the Swedish address system. Section 3 presents the data of the study. In section 4 the quantitative

results are discussed followed by a qualitative analysis in section 5. Section 6 summarizes and discusses the findings.

2 Background

2.1 Swedish as a pluricentric language

Swedish is the main language in Sweden and one of two official languages in Finland, alongside Finnish. In Sweden the vast majority of the population of about 9.7 million (Statistics Sweden, 2015) has Swedish as their first language. The Swedish-speaking Finns constitute a linguistic minority of 5.3 per cent of the Finnish population of about 5.5 million (Statistics Finland, 2015). It is a minority with a strong legal, economical and cultural position, as a result of historical circumstances (Liebkind, Moring and Tandefelt, 2007). Finland formed part of the Swedish kingdom until 1809 when it became part of the Russian empire. However, Swedish remained the language of the public sphere until Finnish slowly replaced it after Finland gained independence at the beginning of the 20th century (Saari, 2012).

2.2 Swedish address

Similar to many languages, Swedish distinguishes between an informal and a formal pronoun of address in the singular, often referred to as T and V pronouns after Latin *tu* and *vos* (Brown and Gilman, 1960). Superficially, the Swedish address system is similar to the French, where the second-person plural pronoun (*vous* in French and *ni* in Swedish) also functions as a formal pronoun of address to one person. However, contrary to French, use of V address (*ni*) is rare in contemporary Swedish, leaving the informal T address (*du*) as the default choice in most contexts and to most interlocutors (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 7). Table 4.1 illustrates the Swedish address system.

TABLE 4.1 *T and V forms in Swedish*

	Subject	Object	Possessive
Singular			
Less formal (T)	<i>du</i> ('you')	<i>dig</i> ('you')	<i>din, ditt, dina</i> * ('your')
More formal (V)	<i>ni</i> ('you')	<i>er</i> ('you')	<i>er, ert, era</i> ('your')*
Plural	<i>ni</i> ('you')	<i>er</i> ('your')	<i>er, ert, era</i> ('your')*

* inflected to agree with the gender and number of the head noun

Thus, despite the apparent binary system, in actual functional terms contemporary Swedish address practices are more similar to the English system where there is only one pronoun of address (*you*). However, the ubiquitous use of the T pronoun is itself a fairly recent development. In the past 50 to 60 years, the Swedish address system has undergone a radical shift from a high level of formality characterized by the pervasiveness of titles and avoidance of direct address altogether; for example, by the use of passive constructions (*Vad önskas?*, ‘What is desired?’), the indefinite pronoun *man* (‘one’) and other impersonal constructions as well as addressing somebody in the third person (*Vad tror doktorn det kan vara?*, ‘What does the doctor think it could be?’). In Sweden, avoidance of direct address was linked to the negative connotations that the formal pronoun, *ni*, had attracted through its non-reciprocal use. A person in an inferior social position – somebody without a title – could be addressed by *ni*, but would be expected to respond by using the other person’s title (Ahlgren, 1978; Fremmer, Chapter 3 of this volume). The social stigma attached to *ni* led to a cumbersome social situation where strangers tended to avoid address altogether in order to not offend the other person (for an overview, see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 7–8). However, in Finland Swedish, use of *ni* has been considered less problematic and is still available as a resource for politeness, albeit not a very common pattern (see Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, pp. 132–9).

A major contributing factor to the rapid shift to almost universal *du* in Sweden in just a few decades was the awkward social situation just described, but it was also a result of the political ideals that gained ground in the 1960s and paved the way for egalitarian and democratic forms of address (Paulston, 1976; Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 8). While similar changes have taken place in society in Finland, they did not affect the address practices to the same extent (Saari, 1995). Nonetheless, already in the 1980s there were reports of *ni* being re-introduced in service encounters in Sweden to express polite respect for an unacquainted, older customer (Mårtensson, 1986). This “new *ni*” has attracted considerable, and mostly negative attention – for example, in letters to the editor – and it is often assumed that it has spread widely. However, research based on reported address usage and participant observation, suggests that the new *ni* is limited to certain contexts, such as upmarket restaurants and shops, where *ni* seems to be ‘a thin social veneer, which disappears as soon as the participant roles change ever so slightly’ (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 112).

3 Data

The empirical data for the present study consist of 318 interactions that were audio and video recorded² at seven theatre box offices and event-booking venues in Finland and Sweden. The data were collected in Helsinki and Turku in Finland, and in Gothenburg, Karlstad, and Stockholm in Sweden in 2013 and 2014. Typically, these are goal-oriented interactions where customers buy tickets to or request information about theatre performances and other events. The interactions are between 11 seconds and 13 minutes long, and take place in Swedish between a total of 318 customers and 16 service providers (henceforth referred to as staff). Table 4.2 gives an overview of the participants of this study. As the table shows, there are clearly fewer staff members in the Finland-Swedish data. This is linked to the societal circumstances in Finland; given the lower number of L1 speakers of Swedish, sales at theatre box offices and similar in Swedish are naturally smaller scale and operated by fewer people in Finland.

The customers vary greatly in age, but for the purposes of this study, the participants were divided into two age groups: younger than 50 and older than 50.³ This division is motivated by the historical development and changes in the Swedish address practices with the late 1960s being a pivotal point (see section 2.1; Fremer, Chapter 3 of this volume). Also with only 30 customers below 30 years of age, it is not meaningful to divide the data into further age brackets.⁴ Table 4.3 outlines the age distribution of the staff and customers.

TABLE 4.2 *Participants in the service encounter study*

	Staff		Customers	
	N	Age range	N	Age range
Sweden	12	19–64	159	16–87
Finland	4	25–58	159	18–89
Total	16		318	

TABLE 4.3 *Age distribution among staff and customers*

	Staff		Customers	
	Below 50	Above 50	Below 50	Above 50
Sweden	8	4	102	57
Finland	2	2	91	68
Total	10	6	193	125

Service encounters are an example of institutional discourse; that is, interactions where at least one participant functions in a professional role. A professional can be defined as a socially ratified and sanctioned expert (Linell, 1990). In our service encounter data there is always one professional, a staff member, and at least one layperson, a customer. Institutional interactions are goal-oriented activities where participants, who usually do not know each other beforehand, collaborate to solve the task at hand or to carry out a transaction (Drew and Heritage, 1992). While such interactions are result-oriented, this fact, however, does not preclude instances of relational activities, such as introducing private topics, joking and laughter (Nelson, 2014).

4 Quantitative results

In this section we present an overview of how customers and staff use, or do not use, address pronouns in the data. While there are many customers, all of whom participate in only one service encounter with one individual staff member, each staff member serves a large number of customers. Despite this difference between customers and staff, it is relevant to investigate the address practices within both groups and make comparisons where possible. The perspective is comparative, contrasting address patterns in the Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish datasets.

We begin by discussing address choice in the customer group. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of the overall patterns among customers in the two age groups in Finland and Sweden respectively. The address patterns used by the customers are *du* (T), *ni* with plural reference, both *du* and plural *ni*, and no direct address. Distinguishing between *ni* as a plural address form, and *ni* as a polite form of address (V) cannot be established on purely structural grounds since Swedish lacks verbal inflexion for number and person (but the distinction is tangible in adjectival concord, see section 5.2, example (9)). Potentially ambiguous cases of *ni* have to be interpreted in the situational context as well as through the researchers' overall sociocultural understanding as members of the respective speech communities. Since *du* is the most prevalent address form in both varieties of Swedish and *ni* is primarily used as a plural form, only cases where *ni* clearly functions as a polite form to address one person have been counted as V address. In fact, none of the customers – neither in Finland nor Sweden – use V address in this non-ambiguous way.

It should also be noted that the quantitative overviews in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 are based on whether a particular form (T address, V address or plural *ni*) occurs at least once in a particular interaction, not on the number of occurrences found in each interaction. The category ‘T only’ means that no other address pronouns than *du* are used in the interactions. Similarly, ‘Plural *ni* only’ indicates that no other direct address pronoun is used. However, in some interactions, several of the address patterns above occur; in particular this is the case when staff are speaking to customers. Accordingly, it has been necessary to include categories with the combinations of forms that occur in the data (e.g., ‘T and plural *ni*’). ‘No address’ refers to interactions where no address pronoun is used. FS refers to Finland Swedish and SS to Sweden Swedish in both figures.

A closer inspection of the data in Figure 4.1 reveals that T only is by far the most dominant address pattern used by Swedish customers aged 50 or older (79 per cent). Older customers in Finland also tend to use T only, but to a lesser extent (54 per cent). Younger customers in both countries, on the other hand, use T only in fewer interactions. In particular, this is the case in Sweden where only a third (34 per cent) of the younger customers address staff with T only, compared to 43 per cent of younger customers in Finland. Instead, many younger customers do not use any direct address pronouns at all (for discussion see section 5.2).

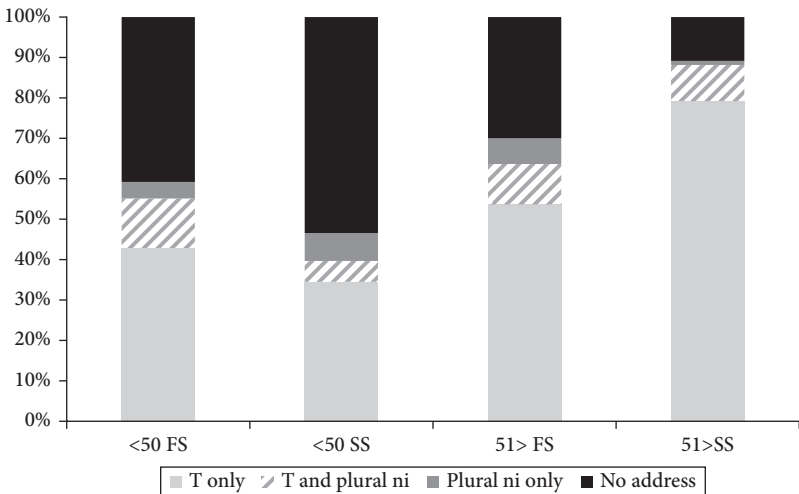


FIGURE 4.1 Customers' use of address forms (T only; T and plural *ni*; plural *ni* only; no address)

For younger Swedish customers, this is the most common pattern, with 53 per cent not addressing the staff member directly. This is in sharp contrast to older Swedish customers where only 11 per cent interact with staff without addressing them directly. In Finland, younger customers also use direct address in proportionally fewer interactions than the older ones, but the generational discrepancy is far less pronounced compared to Sweden. In other words, the greatest discrepancy in address practices is to be found between younger and older customers in Sweden.

There are also some instances of plural *ni* – situations where the customer addresses the establishment in general rather than the individual staff (for examples, see section 5.3). Both age groups in both countries use the plural *ni* to a similar extent (approximately 10–20 per cent when also co-occurrences with T address (*du*) are counted).

We now turn to how the staff interact with customers. As Figure 4.2 shows, there is more variation in address use among staff compared to customers, especially in the Finland-Swedish data and among younger

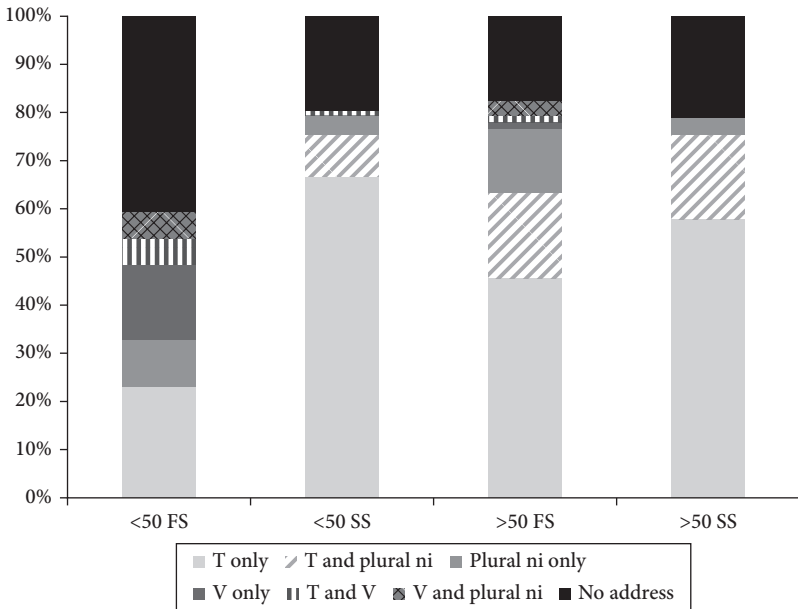


FIGURE 4.2 *Staff members' use of address forms (T only; T and plural ni; plural ni only; V only; T and V; V and plural ni; no address)*

Finland-Swedish staff in particular. Use of T is the most common pattern in three of the staff categories. In about half of the interactions, the older staff in both countries use T only (Sweden 58 per cent, Finland 46 per cent). For younger staff, there is, however, a clear difference between the two national varieties: in Sweden, T only is used in two-thirds of the interactions, compared to one-quarter in Finland. V address to customers is used almost exclusively by Finland-Swedish staff, where three out of four staff members use V at least in some of the interactions. The highest share of V address is found among the younger staff members from Finland (26 per cent, if all categories involving V are taken into account). The older staff member who uses V address does so only in a few cases. In the Sweden-Swedish data there is only one instance of V address altogether: a 27-year-old staff member who addresses a 42-year-old customer by *ni* (V) once, but then switches to T address (see example (9)).

All four staff members in Finland and nine of the 12 staff in Sweden do not address the customer directly in some of the interactions. The greatest proportion of no address can be found among the younger Finland-Swedish staff (40 per cent of the interactions). Finally, use of plural *ni* (alone or together with T or V) ranges from 34 per cent among older staff in Finland to 13 per cent among younger staff in Sweden.

To summarize, the overall trend in both countries is that the younger customers use less direct T address and often no address at all, compared to older customers. In Sweden this trend is particularly pronounced: only 40 per cent of younger customers address staff with T (on its own or together with plural *ni*) compared to 90 per cent of older customers. However, among the staff the trend is different. Both younger and older staff in Sweden use T (on its own or together with plural *ni* or V) in about 75 per cent of the interactions. In Finland, there is a noticeable difference between younger and older staff. Whereas the older staff use T address in a total of 65 per cent of the interactions, the younger staff use T address in less than 30 per cent of the interactions. These findings are discussed in more detail in section 6.

5 Qualitative analysis

In this section, we turn to a qualitative analysis of the address patterns in the data starting with T address.

5.1 T address (*du*)

As the quantitative overview illustrates, the most common pattern in the data is direct T address (*du*). In this section we show some typical cases. The first two examples show customer use of T address (C = customer and S = staff). Example (1) is sourced from Sweden's national theatre and example (2) from its Swedish-language counterpart in Finland.⁵

- (1) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), female customer (66 years)
- 01 C: hejsan (0.8) ja tänkte fråga **dig** (0.3) lite men ja har nämligen
'hi, I wanted to ask you.T something, I have you see'
- 02 ett (0.3) presentkort
'a gift card'
- 03 S: mm
'mm'
- 04 C: som går ut den tjuåttonde i tolfte
'which expires on the twenty-eight of December'
- (2) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (25 years), female customer (54 years)
- 01 C: jä (.) vad rekommenderar **du** att vilken tid ska man komma
'yes, what do you.T recommend, what time should one be there'
- 02 S: det kan vara bra att vara där kring kvart före så (.)
'it can be good to be there around quarter to'
- 03 det e ju ändå slutsålt (.) kanske lite tidigare till å med
'it is sold out, anyway perhaps even a little bit earlier'

In both examples, the customers address the staff directly with T (*du*, *dig*) when asking for information, *jag tänkte fråga dig* ('I wanted to ask you') in example (1) and *vad rekommenderar du* ('what do you recommend') in example (2). Examples (3) and (4) show typical cases of staff members' use of *du* (T).

- (3) Theatre box office, Sweden: female staff (55 years), female customer (70 years)
- 01 S: då ska vi se å **du** va en pensionär (sa **du**)
'let's see then and you.T are a senior citizen you.T said'
- 02 C: ja
'yes'
- 03 (19.8)
- 04 S: nu ska vi se (0.4) vad hade **du** för telefonnummer
'now let's see what is your.T phone number'

- (4) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (53 years), female customer (67 years)
- 01 S: så där å en biljett sa [du]
'there and one ticket you.T said'
- 02 C: [en]
'one'
- 03 (5.2)
- 04 S: å ja behöver **ditt** telefonnummer
'and I need your.T phone number'

In line 1 in both examples (3) and (4), the staff members use T address for checking that they have the correct details: *en pensionär sa du* ('a senior you said?'), *en biljett sa du* ('one ticket you said?'). In line 4 in both examples, the staff members ask for further information they need for carrying out the transaction: *vad hade du för telefonnummer?* ('what is your phone number?'), *ja behöver ditt telefonnummer* ('I need your phone number').

As the examples above show, T address (*du*) is used by both customers and staff, in both countries.

5.2 No address

The second most frequent pattern is to use no direct address in the interaction. This pattern can be found throughout the data, but it is more common among the customers. Examples (5) and (6) show two cases where neither the customer nor the staff use any address pronouns.

- (5) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), female customer (33 years)
- 01 S: hej
'hi'
- 02 C: hej ikväll Fanny och och (.) [Alexander] tack
'hi tonight Fanny and and Alexander please'
- 03 S: [mm] hur många
'mm how many'
- 04 C: eh: två stycken
'eh two'
- (6) Cultural venue, Finland: female staff (29 years), female customer (40 years)
- 01 S: hej
'hi'
- 02 (0.3)

- 03 C: hej hej
'hi hi'
- 04 (0.2)
- 05 S: **hur kan jag hjälpa**
'how can I help'
- 06 (0.6)
- 07 C: jag undrar bara om **det finns kvar** (.) **biljetter** till svenska
'I just wonder if there are tickets left to the Swedish'
- 08 dagen
'day [festivity]'
- 09 S: jä (.) **hur många får det vara**
'yes, how many may it be'
- 10 C: en (0.2) biljett räcker bra
'one ticket is enough'

In research on address, using no address has often been regarded as an avoidance strategy (see, for example, Yli-Vakkuri, 2005). Avoidance is, however, not the main issue in all cases where there is no address. When the customer in example (5) requests tickets for a play by saying *ikväll Fanny och Alexander tack* ('tonight Fanny and Alexander please', line 2), the focus is on the object of the transaction rather than the interlocutors. Similarly, when the customer in example (6) initiates the transaction with *jag undrar bara om det finns kvar biljetter...* ('I just wonder if there are any tickets left...', line 7), this can be regarded as a conventional way of making a request in a service encounter where the focus is on the object (the tickets).

The staff member's use of *hur många?* ('how many') in line 3 in example (5) from Sweden can also be interpreted as an efficient expression since it leaves out self-evident information. However, in example (6) from Finland, the expressions *hur kan jag hjälpa* ('how can I help', line 5) and *hur många får det vara?* ('how many may it be', line 9) are somewhat different. Both expressions are routinized ways of initiating transactions or asking for further details common before the *du*-reform (see section 2.1; Fremer, Chapter 3 of this volume). In our data, such phrases are more frequent in the Finland-Swedish service encounters but occur, to some extent, also in the Sweden-Swedish dataset (see example (9)).

5.3 Plural *ni*

Plural *ni* occurs in the data from both Sweden and Finland. It is not a particularly frequent pattern, but there are some contexts where it

is recurrent. Customers often use plural *ni* to refer collectively to staff members as representative of the theatre or ticket venue. Staff, on the other hand, sometimes use plural *ni* to address customers who buy tickets not only for themselves but for several people. Both of these collective uses (see Tykesson-Bergman, 2006, p. 63) can be found in example (7) from Sweden.

- (7) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), female customer (60 years)
- 01 C: hej [jag] skulle vilja beställ- eller köpa **biljetter** till KIDS
'hi I would like to rese- or buy tickets for KIDS'
- 02 S: [hej]
'hi'
- 03 S: ja
'yes'
- 04 C: har **ni** nånting den nu ska vi se var jag hade sett de (.)
'do you.PL have anything on the, now let's see where I have seen it (.)'
- 05 lördagen den sextonde i elfte
'Saturday the sixteenth of November'
- 06 S: jag kollar
'let me check'
- 07 C: mm
- 08 (3.0)
- 09 S: hur många ska **ni** ha i så fall
'how many do you.PL want in that case'
- 10 C: vad sex stycken
'sorry six'
- 11 S: nej **jag** har inga där tyvärr alls
'no, I have none at all, unfortunately'
- 12 C: det har **du** inte
'oh, you.T don't'

In example (7), the customer initiates the transaction with a request for several tickets (*biljett-er*, 'ticket-s', line 1). This establishes that a group of people are going to attend the show, which explains the fact that the staff uses plural *ni* in line 9. In line 4, the customer uses plural *ni* to address the staff as a representative of the establishment: *har ni nånting...* ('do you have anything...'). This can be compared to collective use of *vi* ('we') by staff in service encounters to refer to the establishment (compare phrases like *Vi har öppet på söndagar*, 'We are open Sundays'). However, in this particular instance, the staff chooses to use the singular *jag* ('I') instead (line 11) to which the customer responds reciprocally with T address (line 12).

The practice of using plural *ni* to refer to a group of people – represented by a single customer – becomes particularly clear in example (8) from Finland. In this example the staff member at a theatre uses both T address (*du*) and plural *ni* in the same turn. The customer she is talking to is ordering beverages for the interval.

- (8) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (58 years), male customer (77 years)
- 01 S: å **hur många personer e ni**
‘and how many persons are you.PL’
- 02 C: fyra
‘four’
- 03 (0.7)
- 04 S: å och **har du varit å tittat på vår hemsida vad ni vill ha**
‘and have you.T looked at our website, what you.PL want’
- 05 C: eh (0.7) nej (jo men) (0.5) kaffe
‘eh, no, yes but coffee’
- 06 (1.0)
- 07 S: fyra kaffe
‘four coffees’

In line 1 in example (8), the staff member uses plural *ni* when she asks the customer *å hur många personer e ni* (‘and how many persons are you’). Given the referential meaning of the utterance it would be nonsensical to argue that *ni* is a case of polite V address here. When the customer has provided the information (line 2: *fyra*, ‘four’), the staff asks what beverages the customer wants to order. This question (line 4) includes both T address (*du*), *har du varit å tittat på vår hemsida* (‘have you looked at our website’) referring to the person ordering the beverages, and plural *ni*, *vad ni vill ha* (‘what you want’) referring to the four people who will be attending the event.

As these examples show, plural *ni* is a resource in the service encounters. By referring to a group of people, or to the establishment, with *ni* the speaker achieves a neutral and unmarked stance.⁶ In the final section of the qualitative analysis, we turn to cases where *ni* is clearly used as a polite form of address to one person.

5.4 V address (*ni*)

As pointed out in section 4, only the staff members use non-ambiguous V address (*ni*). Almost all examples occur in service encounters from Finland with younger staff members. In the data from Sweden, V address

is extremely rare, with only one non-ambiguous occurrence (example (9)). The staff member is a 27-year-old male attending to a 42-year-old customer.

- (9) Theatre box office, Sweden: male staff (27 years), male customer (42 years)
- 01 C: hej (1.2) eh jag ska hämta biljetter till en föreställning på
'hi, eh, I am here to pick up tickets to a play on'
- 02 S: lördan (-) miljö: [mm]
'Saturday (inaudible) environment'
- 03 [mm] i vilket namn
'in what name'
- 04 C: FIRST NAME LAST NAME
- 05 (24.5) ((staff works on the computer))
- 06 S: mt är ni säker på att det var i det namnet
'are you.v sure that it's in that name'
- 07 C: mt (0.8) ja+a
'yes'
- 08 S: du (ha-) (0.3) du har svarat ja tack (0.8) [i] god tid
'you.SG ha- you.SG have confirmed in time?'
- 09 C: [ja] ja+a
'yes, yes'
- 10 S: det skulle inte hämtas tidigare eller så
'it was not supposed to be picked up earlier or?'
- 11 C: nä en halvtimme innan föreställning sa hon (.) så att
'no, half an hour before the play she said, so'

The customer in example (9) is picking up tickets for a play. The staff requests the name in which the booking was made (line 3), but then has difficulties finding the tickets. When he checks the name of the customer again, in line 6, he uses V address: *är ni säker på att det är i det namnet?* ('are you sure that it's in that name?'). Here the interpretation cannot be a case of plural *ni*: the adjective *säker* ('sure') refers to one person (the plural form is *säkra*). It can also be noted that the staff member uses constructions without address (lines 3, 10) which also have a distancing effect. However, in line 8, directly after having used V address, the staff switches to T address: *du har svarat ja tack i god tid* ('you've confirmed in time?'). There is no apparent reason for this shift from V to T at this point (i.e., there is no change in the situation or in the participant roles).

In the Finland-Swedish data there are several service encounters with unambiguous V address only (see Figure 4.2). However, variation between T and V address also occurs among staff in the service

encounters from Finland. In particular this is the case among young staff who show the highest proportion of V address in the data. In example (10), the 25-year-old female staff uses both V and T address to a middle-aged customer (47).

- (10) Theatre box office, Finland: female staff (25 years), female customer (47 years)
- 01 S: [hej]
'hi'
- 02 C: [hej]
'hi'
- 03 (1.3)
- 04 ((customer is eating an ice cream))
- 05 C: FIRST NAME (0.9) LAST NAME (0.5)
- 06 jag har en biljett på tredje rad[en]
'I have a ticket on the third row'
- 07 S: [ju]st det det var <ni som ringde>
'right it was you.v who phoned'
- 08 (0.5) vi ska se (0.3) där
'let's see there'
- 09 (2.1)
- 10 S: å det var personalbilje[tt]:
'and it was a staff's ticket'
- 11 C: [jå+å]
'yes'
- 12 ((10 lines omitted))
- 13 ((the customer pays for the ticket by credit card))
- 14 S: mt (0.4) så där var så goda (.)
'here it is be so good.PL'
- 15 vill du ha kvitto
'do you.T want the receipt'

As in example (9), the customer is picking up tickets. When she has identified herself, the staff member confirms this by saying *just det det var ni som ringde* ('right it was you who phoned', line 7) using V address. Later on when she hands over the tickets, she uses the morphologically plural form *var så goda* ('here you are', literally 'be so good.PL'), even though the customer is alone and buys only one ticket. In the very next turn, however, the staff adopts T address when asking if the customer needs the receipt: *vill du ha kvitto* ('do you want the receipt').

In both examples (9) and (10), the change from V to T address is quite sudden. It occurs without anything having changed in the relationship

or in the interaction. In example (11) from Finland, however, we have a clear case of a contextual change. In this example, the 29-year-old staff first uses T address with the 89-year-old customer, but later changes to V address. The example is not from a theatre box office but from a venue with a broader type of service. The customer is casting his vote for his candidate in a contest organized by a charity organization.

- (11) Cultural venue, Finland: female staff (29), male customer (89)
- 01 S: jag kan hjälpa fast om **du** tar å viker
'I can help but if you.T fold'
- 02 C: ja det f- kanske bäst att **du** gör det
'well, maybe it is better if you.T do it'
- 03 (0.8)
- 04 S: å sådär (.) å ifall **ni** ville bidra med nån summa
'okay (.) and in case you.v wanted to contribute with an amount'
- 05 så då ska man sätta det hit också
'one can put it there as well'
- 06 C: ska ja- ska jag sätta slanten också dit
'shall I- shall I put the money there too'

In lines 1 and 2, the staff is helping the customer to fold his ballot ticket. Both use T address: *om du tar å viker* ('if you fold'.T, staff), *bäst att du gör det* ('better if you.T do it', customer). After a brief pause, the staff switches to V address when she brings up the question of contributing a small sum of money to the charity: *ifall ni ville bidra med nån summa så då ska man sätta det hit* ('in case you.v wanted to contribute with an amount one can put it there as well', line 4–5). Asking for a money contribution is a potentially sensitive topic requiring a greater level of politeness, which could be the reason for the switch from T to V address.

The examples show that V address is used to a limited extent in Swedish: with one exception, all cases are found in the Finland–Swedish data. When V address is used it often co-occurs with T in the same interaction, which shows the optional character of V address in Swedish. The intra-individual variation in examples (9), (10) and (11) illustrates the complexity of V address in our data.

6 Discussion and conclusion

Previous research based on reported address practices in Sweden and Finland suggests that the T form – *du* – is the default form of address

in Swedish, with particularly pervasive use in Sweden (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009). Our study of actual address in service encounters confirms *du* as the overall most common form of address. However, some interesting variation can be found. With regard to customers, the greatest discrepancy in address choice is not to be found between the two national varieties of Swedish but between younger and older customers in Sweden. While older customers are clearly ‘*du*-users’ with T address in close to 90 per cent of the interactions, the younger ones use direct address – T and in some cases plural *ni* (but not V) – to a fairly limited extent (below 50 per cent). This could be interpreted in light of the overall societal shift towards universal *du* in the late 1960s. Older customers in Sweden are more likely to actively use direct T address than customers younger than 50, who have not experienced the implementation of the *du*-reform. A similar age difference can be found also in the Finland-Swedish dataset, but among staff, where younger staff use T address much less than the older ones (approximately 30 per cent as opposed to about 65 per cent).

Much debate since the mid-1980s has focused on the controversial re-entry of V address – *ni* – in the function as a polite address pronoun in Sweden (see section 2.1). However, our results demonstrate limited use of V address. Primarily, V address is used by younger Finland-Swedish staff members. In contrast, in the entire Sweden-Swedish data there is only a single unambiguous occurrence of V address (example (9)). The ambivalence in the use of T and V in some of the qualitative examples indicates that V address is indeed a thin social veneer, which is quickly discarded (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, p. 112). The almost complete lack of V address in the Sweden-Swedish data contrasts sharply with the view that ‘the new *ni*’ has been reintroduced in the service sector as a polite form of address. Of course this does not mean that staff in our data are not polite to customers. Politeness is simply expressed by other means and can sometimes be communicated by using plural *ni* or by not making use of direct address at all. In our data, it is fairly common to use no address form at all, especially among the younger customers in Sweden. However, as shown in the qualitative analysis, no address cannot automatically be interpreted as an avoidance strategy. Instead, it is a way of focusing on the object of the transaction. Even though expressions without direct address (e.g., *Kan jag hjälpa till*, ‘Can I help’) may well originate in an avoidance strategy, through frequent use they have become lexicalized and are simply used as formulaic expressions.

In Finland, the address behaviour of the staff confirms results based on other data (Clyne, Norrby and Warren, 2009, on reported address; Norrby, Wide, Lindström and Nilsson, 2015, on medical consultations). The Finland-Swedish staff, especially the younger group, use fewer T forms (*du*) and more V forms (*ni*), which can be interpreted as an orientation towards negative politeness, with more indirect and formal expression for maintaining interpersonal relationships (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In contrast, the older customers in Sweden, who have the highest level of T address, confirm the tendency of more positive politeness strategies (i.e., use of more direct and informal patterns) in Sweden Swedish. Moreover, the different politeness orientations evident in these service encounters can be related to the overall societal conditions in the respective countries. Previous research has found Finns to be more reserved than Swedes (Laine-Sveiby, 1991; Saari, 1995; Charles and Louhiala-Salminen, 2007). This, in turn, can be related to research demonstrating that Swedish society leans more towards informality and intimacy whereas Finnish society is characterized by higher levels of formality and distance (Pettersson and Nurmela, 2007). However, we have also found some complicating tendencies in our data that cannot be interpreted as a result of different societal orientations alone. As mentioned earlier, the greatest difference in addressing behaviour is found between younger and older customers in Sweden, not across national varieties. Furthermore, the results show that younger customers in Sweden have the largest proportion of no address, followed by younger staff in Finland. The findings show that factors such as age and participant roles, as well as the situational and interactional context, are important for understanding more fully how address is used for managing interpersonal relationships.

Notes

- 1 This research is supported financially by Riksbankens jubileumsfond (grant no. M12-0137:1).
- 2 Through the use of video recordings it is possible to establish, for example, the number of participants in the service encounter; a fact which is important when studying address.
- 3 Since our data consist of naturally occurring interactions, it was not possible to control the age distribution. All who agreed to participate filled out a

- consent form and provided background information (e.g., age, gender, regional background).
- 4 The reasons for the age imbalance in the data are most likely that the institutions in question predominantly cater for an older audience, and that younger people prefer to buy their tickets online.
 - 5 All examples include the following contextual information: type of venue, country, staff and customer's age and gender. Features discussed are marked in bold. For transcription symbols, see p. 95.
 - 6 For similar use of the second-person plural *Ihr* in German, see Kretzenbacher and Schüpbach, Chapter 2 of this volume.

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Transcription symbols

[point when overlapping talk begins
]	point when overlapping talk stops
wo+ord	legato pronunciation
wo:rd	lengthening of the sound
<word>	produced with slower pace
(word)	uncertain transcription
((word))	meta comment
(-)	talk not discernible
wo-	audible cut-off
mt	click (for example from smacking one’s lips)
(.)	micro pause (less than 0.2 seconds)
(0.5)	silence measured in tenths of a second