

CHANGES IN SWEDISH ADDRESS TERMS DESCRIBED BY POWER-SOLIDARITY  
DIAGRAMS

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It is generally assumed that a language reflects the social stratification and ideology of its speakers and various East Asiatic languages with honorific terms are often mentioned as evidence. Illustrations, however, can certainly be found in most languages. This paper will discuss the case of Swedish, which is interesting because radical changes both in the use of pronouns for second person reference and the use of first name for third person reference have occurred during the last decades. The changes will be discussed in terms of the two dimensions, power and solidarity, suggested by Brown & Gilman (1960) and a new kind of diagram based on these variables will be presented. The diagram used by Brown and Gilman has been found to be difficult to interpret.

The spread of du in recent decades in Swedish has been commented on by several authors e g Bratt-Paulston (1975) and Ahlgren (1978). The well-known change is generally taken as a sign of greater equality in Sweden. The increased use of first name when referring to third person is noted in Sigurd (1980) and it is generally taken to be associated with the increased use of Du, although it spread later. Although the frequent use of first name may be taken as a sign of greater equality and friendliness it has brought about a new anonymity. When we only hear the first names of people we meet and when people are only referred to by first name it is difficult to identify them later in telephone directories or similar larger contexts.

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## T and V pronouns

The old Germanic system included only the pronoun þu. It was used by everybody to everybody as far as one can tell from the sources. The Nordic usage is witnessed by the Icelandic sagas. When the Viking Egill Skallagrímsson talks to the English king Ethelred at York he does not use any other term of address than he uses to his fellow vikings or other persons he comes across in the British Isles. The Nordic þu developed into tu and du in the Nordic languages. To a British audience the word may be identified with thou in Shakespeare's plays.

In addition to du a pronoun Ni developed in Swedish (for details see Ahlgren, 1978). Etymologically, it is to be derived from I, the pronoun of the second plural, to which an n from the preceding finite verb form has been attached (e.g. through a phrase such as sägen I > sägen ni, "say you". Such cases of metaanalysis are well known from the history of languages (for a detailed discussion of different cases and many examples see Elert, 1969). Ni has, however, never been a perfect partner of du which is well established. Ni is one of the alternatives available to a Swede, when he talks to a stranger, when he wants to be polite or show distance. Since the classical article by Brown & Gilman on the pronouns of solidarity and power the symbols T (after French tu) and V (after vous) have been used. The T/V situation in Swedish around 1950 can roughly be depicted as follows.

	Swedish	English equivalent
T	Du, used to friends and children	you
V	Ni, used to strangers (estranging) and superordinates (politely, humbly)	you, Sir

## Alternatives and avoidance

As noted by many observers, however, Swedes have a number of alternative ways of handling the address situation. Bratt-Paulston (1975) made a point of the existence of these alternatives and took it as evidence of the kind of avoidance often

noted by anthropologists. Bratt-Paulston tested the acceptability of different alternatives by studying the ways the question What do you want? (What would you like to have) can be rendered. Below the most important renderings are given together with some brief comments.

Second person expressions:

Vad vill Du ha?                   What do you want? To friends, children  
(and animals)

Vad vill ni ha?                    What do you want, Sir? To strangers,  
politely (humbly) or distantly.

Third person expressions:

Vad vill hon/han ha?            What does he/she want? In certain rural  
dialects (rare and obsolete)

Vad vill frun/damen ha?        What does the wife/lady want? Used  
politely to potential customers in the  
market place (frun) or shops (damen).

Vad vill Ulla ha?                What does Ulla (first name) want? Used  
e g with a certain distance between  
(old) ladies or a mother-in-law  
addressing her daughter-in-law or a  
mother addressing her child.

Vad vill mor ha?                What does the mother (father or  
similar) want? Used (politely) e g by  
son or daughter.

Vad vill översten ha?         What does the colonel (etc) want? Used  
politely to superiors or at least  
persons with certain titles (royal,  
military, academic, ecclestastical).  
The address of royalty is carefully  
handled by the court. The king is al-  
ways addressed as kungen (the king),  
but older terms such as Ers majestät  
(Your Majesty), Ers kunglig höghet  
(Your Royal highness) may be heard.

First person plural:

Vad vill vi ha?                      What do we want? Used in particular  
by doctors when talking to patients  
(known from several anecdotes).

The most anecdotal alternatives are, however, those where the addressee is not mentioned, but a passive (with deleted addressee) or an impersonal construction is used. The following are some examples of these constructions.

Vad får det lov att vara?      What is it allowed to be?  
Vad behagas?                      What is required?  
Vad önskas?                        What is wished?  
Vad kan jag hjälpa till med?    What can I help with? (Where the  
speaker but not the addressee is  
mentioned.)  
Hur känns det?                    How does it feel?  
Hur mås det?                      How well is it?

Most Swedes are able to come up with a series of such examples, some of which are stock examples and often laughed at. Bratt-Paulston thinks that this laughter is also of special interest and should be interpreted like laughter connected with other cases of avoidance mentioned in the anthropological literature.

#### Plotting the spread of Du

When we speak of the spread of a term we use a territorial metaphor. If we want to define this territory closer we may take the dimensions solidarity and power proposed by Brown and Gilman as the two dimensions, e.g. power as the y-axis and solidarity as the x-axis. We may furthermore try to scale the dimensions of this matrix by assigning the value +1 to the situation of great power or solidarity and 0 to the neutral situation, where no power or solidarity is present. If we plot the main address terms discussed above in the box diagram thus constructed we get the following figure (1).

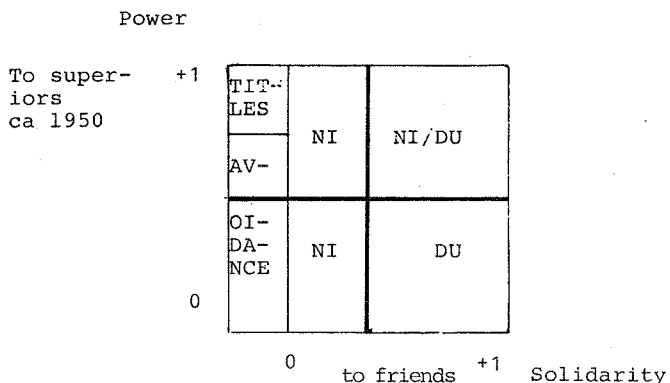


Fig 1 Swedish pronouns of address, titles and avoidance expressions about 1950 plotted in a power-solidarity diagram.

The square solidarity +1, power 0 (S:+1,P:0) denotes the situation when the addressee is a friend and neither superior nor inferior to the speaker. Du is the obvious choice in this square. If we would like to compare the situation in Sweden and France, where tu is used more restrictively, only to very close friends, we could plot tu only at the far right part of the solidarity axis. It is, however, reasonable not to grade the dimensions inside the cells and use the space to indicate the importance of different alternatives instead. This is the way the alternatives are represented in the diagrams in this paper.

The cell P:+1,S:0 represents the address to superiors, either because one has (unwillingly) to show inferiority (to be humble) or because one wants (willingly) to please the other (to be polite), e g when a prospective customer is being addressed. If a pronoun is used it is generally Ni, but titles are used at least to certain dignitaries and avoidance expressions also occur as was discussed earlier.

In the square where both power and solidarity is 0 we represent address to strangers. In the time we are discussing (around 1950) Ni was fairly common, as is indicated in the diagram. One might, in fact, distinguish between the situation when the

name and perhaps title of the addressee is known but he is not a friend and when he is a complete stranger.

In the square P:+1,S:+1 we may think of the case when the addressee is a powerful person, but also my friend (as with school mates etc). In a conflicting situation Ni (and titles as in the square P:1+, S:0) would be used in formal situations, e g when a person addresses a school mate who is the judge in the court. But privately they would both use Du. This is indicated by the slash in the square.

What happened in the 1970's was a dramatic spread of Du, which should show as an invasion of Du into the other squares of the power-solidarity diagram. The situation is depicted in fig 2. Strangers would now be addressed by Du without much hesitation, and the amount of avoidance has decreased. This is shown by the exchange of Ni into Du and the smaller portion of avoidance in the particular square (P:0, S:0).

In the square where the address to superiors who are not also one's friends is shown Ni is still the main pronoun. But titles are also less frequent and so are avoidance expressions. Many Swedes of the 1970's would not hesitate to use Du as address even to powerful superiors and dignitaries and this is indicated in the diagram by the word Du in the square. One might, however, also interpret the increased use of Du as a sign of less respect for superiors. Many Swedes found less reason to accept other persons as superior, and therefore to use Ni or titles. This is part of the equalitarian society produced by the long social-democratic rule.

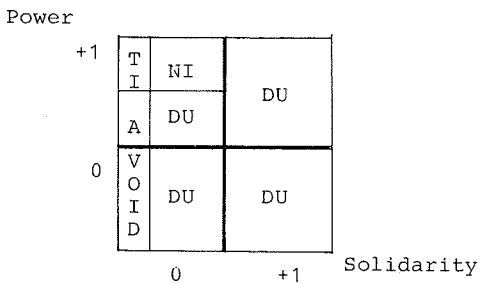


Fig 2 Swedish terms of address about 1975 plotted in a power-solidarity diagram.

In the square corresponding to the situation where the addressee is both a superior and a friend Swedes would use Du even in fairly formal situations around 1975. This is indicated by having Du only in the corresponding square of fig 2.

Evidence for the changes discussed can be found by talking to Swedes, in newspapers, where these matters are often discussed etc. There is, however, also more exact evidence from an investigation into Swedish advertisements covering 1950-1975, see fig 3 (after Nowak & Andrén, 1982). The figure shows the gradual decline of Ni and the increase of Du in advertisements. The year 1968, the year of the youth revolt, seems to be important heretoo. A dramatic rise of the curve of Du can be seen. We also note a certain levelling of Ni since 1973, which may also get support from the intuitions of many Swedes today (in the 1980's). Shop assistants were eager to be equal and used Du in the 1970's, but now in the beginning of the 1980's with renewed commercial interest and great unemployment it seems that selling, and pleasing the customers is considered more important than manifesting one's ideology. But detailed empirical investigations are needed if one wants to explain the changes more deeply.

Fig 3 can also be taken as evidence of a decreased avoidance. If the figures for the use of Du and Ni are added they represent the proportion where a choice is made and the problem is not avoided. If these figures are calculated we find that there was a tendency to avoid the choice between the two pronouns which increased until about 1968. After that important year not only did Du become common, but the tendency to take stand increased as well.

It is also to be noted that certain state agencies or departments decided that Du should be the official pronoun of address. Thus the new head of the social department declared that Du was to be used in his department 1968. Other state or private organizations followed more or less officially.

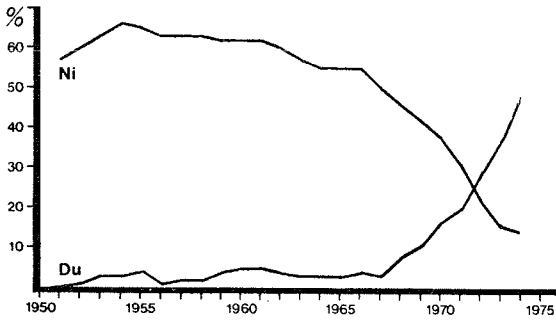


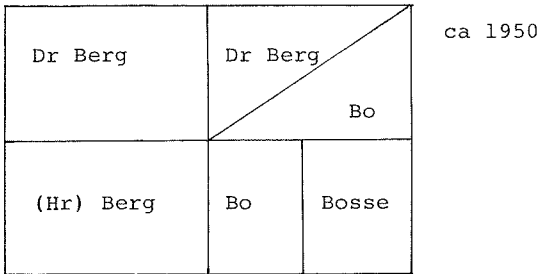
Fig 3 Percentage of the advertisements where the reader is addressed as Du and Ni (after Nowak & Andrén, 1982)



Reference to third person

Reference to a third person may also be plotted in a power-solidarity diagram. The situation around 1950 is presented in fig 4, a and b below. Diagram b is a formalized version using T:title, L:last name, F:first name, N:nickname.

a)



b)

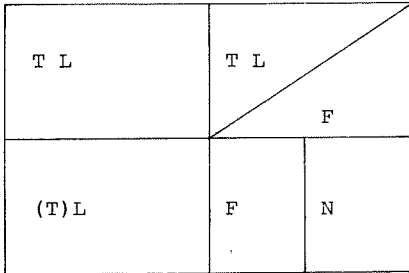


Fig 4 Reference to third person around 1950 demonstrated by ways of referring to a person named Bo Berg who is a doctor and is nicknamed Bosse by his closest friends. In diagram b T:title, L:last name, F:first name, N:nickname.

Figure 4 shows that a person who is a superior, or to whom one wants to be polite, may be referred to by his name and title. Typically the persons referred to in this way are dignitaries within the army, church, university, medicine, civil service. We note that the top of the hierarchy, the king, is referred

to by title and first name (TF). In the square where solidarity is +1 and there is no difference in power the natural way of referring is by first name. Among close friends a nickname may be used. In Swedish one common type of nickname is constructed by doubling the final consonant of the stem syllable (if there is no consonant use s) and adding for the male e (Sven: Svenne, Bo: Bosse) for the female a(n) (Elisabet: Bettan). In the square where the person is both a superior and a friend the choice of the title and the last name is the rule in a formal situation, in private the first name around 1950.

If the person is not a superior and not a friend and if the name is known one used the last name alone, optionally with the title hr (Mr). If the last name is used by itself it might have a touch of superiority i e the person addressed is treated as an inferior, a case which is not covered by the present diagram. Extensions of the diagram are discussed below.

The situation around 1975 is shown in fig 5 (a,b). The most striking fact is that the use of the first name has spread to the situation when a person who is both a superior and a friend is being referred to officially. The spread of Du has been accompanied by a reference to a third person by his first name e g Olof, Bo. Nicknames such as Olle, Bosse are, however, hardly used in this situation. They are still reserved for privacy. The spread of the first name seems to have occurred some five years after the spread of Du (Sigurd, 1980).

a)

Dr Berg Bo Berg	Bo	
Bo Berg	Bo	Bosse

ca 1975

b)

T L F L	F	
F L	F	N

Fig 5 Reference to third person around 1975 demonstrated using the same symbols and example as in fig 4.

The increased use of first names also shows up in such official papers as testimonials, where the referee might have introduced the person to be commented on and evaluated by his full name but later refers to by his first name only, if he is a friend of the writer of the certificate. This is clearly a break with legal customs of the the 1950s.

The encreased use of first names can also be observed in board and committee meetings etc, where the chairman and members now quickly learn and use each other's first name. Such meetings are felt to be less formal nowadays. Around 1950 words such as the chairman, the speaker were the rule.

Expanding and interpreting the power-solidarity diagrams

Clearly, the dimensions power and solidarity allow a 9-square diagram (matrix) if they are both scaled in three steps (+1,0,-1), not only in two as demonstrated so far. Such a diagram is shown below (fig 6). So far we have only studied the top right four squares of the diagram and plotted Swedish terms in them.

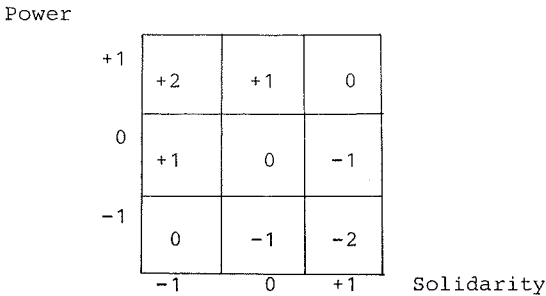


Fig 6 Power-solidarity diagram with 9 cells, established by assuming three values on each dimension. The figures in the cells are theoretical formality values calculated by subtracting the solidarity values from the power values.

The additional cells represent different combinations of values of power and solidarity, which may be identified and interpreted with more or less difficulty and more or less utility for linguistic description. The cell P:+1, S:-1 may be the situation when a powerful enemy is addressed. We may think of the address of mighty, unfriendly gods, devils. As is well-known from the anthropological literature such gods are often not mentioned by name (taboo, avoidance). The cell P:0, S:-1 may be interpreted as the situation where an enemy without power is to be addressed. The cell P:-1, S:-1 is the cell where an inferior enemy is being addressed, to be used for plotting the special expressions used for this situation. The cell P:-1, S:0 may be used for plotting the situation when an inferior person

who is neither an enemy nor a friend is at hand. The cell P:-1, P:+1 seems more interesting as it may be interpreted to cover the situation when an inferior friend is addressed, e g when a little child (baby) or a dear animal is to be addressed. Special nicknames, baby talk expressions, diminutives may be plotted in this cell.

The usefulness of the diagram, of course, rests on its potentialities for plotting linguistic distinctions. Typological studies are needed in order to determine which cells of the diagram are of primary interest. We must also note that the dimensions power and solidarity need concrete interpretation. The attributes of power and the meaning of friendship differ between cultures. Of course defining power and solidarity by verbal criteria would be circular. But, to be sure, verbal markers are important.

On the whole solidarity and power seem to draw in opposite directions. If we want to establish one dimension, e g called theoretical formality we might measure it using the following simple formula (1) where the value of S is deducted from P. (1)  $F = P - S$ , where F is formality, P is power and S is solidarity, both measured on the scale -1,0+1. F varies between -2 and +2. These values are inserted in the diagram fig 6. As seen from the diagram, two squares get the value +1, two get the value -1 and three get the value 0. These values may be found to be useful in defining the use of terms of address and reference. It seems to be the case that title and first name, avoidance and taboo are used in particular when the formality value is +2. The most intimate and familiar terms, diminutives, baby talk, special nicknames etc are restricted to situations when the value of formality is -2. In many languages, in the cells with the value +1 a V pronoun and TL may be used, in the cells with the value -1 a T pronoun and first names. The cells where the formality value is 0 are of particular interest as the conflict between T and V may be solved differently in different languages.

## Hostile and guest languages

The distinction between ergative and non-ergative (nominative) languages is based on the identification of subjects of intransitive verbs with the agent or patient (object) of transitive verbs. If the subject is identified with the object of transitive verbs (by using the same morphological marker) the language is called ergative. If the subject of intransitive verbs is identified with the agent of transitive verbs (as in English) the language is termed non-ergative (nominative). A similar approach can be taken in other areas of languages. We will here distinguish between hostile and guest languages on the basis of the identification of the terms of address and third person reference in certain choice situations. The two terms hostile and guest are to be associated with the semantic not the phonetic development of the common indoeuropean word underlying both the word host(ile) and quest.

As was observed by Brown & Gilman many languages have a binary choice between terms which may be symbolized T and V. T is roughly speaking the informal address V the formal address.

If we take the address to strangers as a test situation we may distinguish between languages and cultures which identify strangers with friends and those which identify strangers with enemies. The first type may be called quest languages and the second type hostile languages. In a quest language the same term of address is used about friends and strangers, in a hostile language the same term is used for enemies and strangers. Swedish, then, has clearly changed from a hostile to a questile language. German and French are hostile languages. For English the distinction is irrelevant as you is used in both cases; we may, however, take a second criterion into account.

There is clearly a choice of terms in the reference to a third person who is both a superior and a friend. A language where speakers take their own point of view a friend is referred to in the same way whether he is without power or if he is in some



and power.  $F_a(A,3)$  is the formality value which would be used if the addressee was to address the third person, and  $F_a(S,3)$  represents the formality value used if the speaker was to address the third person.

The speaker has a choice when referring to a third person. He may base his choice of verbal expression on his own relations, to the third person or on the addressee's relations to the third person. If the speaker's relations to the third person are less formal (more familiar) than the addressee's relations, the addressee might feel like an outsider (alien) or unduly intimate and according to several sources of etiquette this way of referring is not good manners. A lady may e g not call a friend by her first name, when speaking about her to a servant. Sometimes using first names seems to be a way of showing off and indicating important acquaintanceships.

If, on the other hand, the speaker uses an expression which is less formal than he himself would use if addressing the third person but in accordance with the relations between the addressee and the third person, the addressee might think of him as being conceited, taking the role of the addressee. This happens sometimes, by accident, in conversation when the speaker forgets to change from the perspective of the addressee to his own. It is quite common when speaking to children and referring to their daddy as daddy (pappa in Swedish).

There are conventional ways of avoiding uneasiness in talking about the third person. One general rule "the politeness rule of third person reference" is the following. "Follow the formality level of the addressee towards the third person only when it is higher than your own".

This may be expressed more formally using the expressions presented above and a BASIC if .. then expression.

$$\text{If } F_a(A,3) > F_a(S,3) \text{ then } F_3(S,3) = F_a(A,3) \text{ ELSE } F_3(S,3) = F_a(S,3)$$

where  $F_3$  is the formality level to be used in selecting the proper third person expression.



The rule prohibits the speaker from using a formality level which is below the one the addressee would use and also a formality level which is lower than his own relations to the third person suggest. This rule is discussed in Sigurd (1980) at some length.

The spread of first name usage may be seen as breaking this rule and certainly many people react as if they considered the new official use of first names about persons they don't know as improper. These people are the ones who do not use Du to everybody.

### Vocative terms

In Latin a person, who is called upon, is marked morphologically. But only in the third declension is the case ending (vocative) unique. The stock example is Brute! (Nominative: Brutus). In the other declensions the ending coincides with the nominative. One may well ask whether the category vocative can be distinguished in languages such as Swedish and English, where there is no overt morphological marker. We think the answer is yes. Forms in the vocative are to be distinguished functionally from third person reference and address.

It seems reasonable to take the vocative as a special kind of speech act on a level with statements, questions and directives, although its function is very restricted and its manifestations very special. It is generally manifested in both verbal and non-verbal signals. Vocative forms occur rather freely. They may occur alone or with other utterances, typically after or before. Some examples are: Bo!, Hovmästarn! (Waiter!), Herr ordförande! (Mr chairman!), Hallå där! (Hallo there, I say!), Du (där)! (you (there)!)

The vocative often occurs before or after a question or an imperative, Bill, kom här! (Bill, come here!), Stängde Du dörren, Bo? (Did you shut the door, Bo?) A better way to use punctuation would perhaps be to write both question and exclamation marks: Stängde Du dörren? Bo! As pointed out to me by Elisabeth Engdahl a Swedish NP in the vocative, e.g. Kära syster is special by showing definiteness only in the adjective. The imperative example

Försvara Dig, Bo! (Defend yourself, Bo!) where the form of the reflexive pronoun is dig not sig shows that it is not governed by the vocative third person form Bo. We suggest that the vocative is not the subject, although it might look like it, in the case where the vocative form is Du (you), e g Försvara dig, Du (Bo). It is more reasonable to consider both Du and Bo as vocatives (double vocative). With this analysis it is true that differences in formality do not show in English address where you is the only alternative. But they show in the vocative where Sir is inserted as a marker of formality e g in Did you ring, Sir? In both English and Swedish a personal pronoun in the vocative may be supplemented with a noun as in Du, Berg (you, Berg), Du, dåre (you, fool) Ni pacifister (you pacifists) which may be analyzed as an apposition. Swedish is peculiar in also allowing a possessive pronoun in this situation e g Din dåre, Era pacifister, but generally only with evaluative nouns (cf Kjellmer, 1976). The construction is to be found in English only in petrified phrases, such as Your (Royal) Highness, Your Majesty, Your Grace.

Vocatives are quite common with greetings and leavetaking expressions, e g Hej, Bo! (Hi, Bo!), Vi ses, Bo! (Be seeing you, Bo!), Adjö, direktörn! (Good-Bye, Mr director! Sir!) The addition of the use of the vocative seems to have increased with the increased use of first names in the 1970s.

Below we list some questions where the vocative expression occurs after the questions. The examples chosen to illustrate that the expressions used in the vocative slot are very much the same as those used as address and third person reference.

Adress	Vocative
Vad vill <u>Du</u> ha?	<u>Bo, Bosse, Du (där), Berg, *Ers Majestät!</u>
Vad vill <u>Ni</u> ha?	<u>Dr Berg. Fru Larsson, Ni (där), Ers M, *Bosse!</u>
Vad vill <u>Ers majestät</u> ha?	? <u>Ers Majestät, *Ni!</u>
Vad vill <u>frun</u> ha?	? <u>frun, *professorskan, *Ni, *Du!</u>
Vad vill <u>doktorn</u> ha?	? <u>doktorn!</u>

In all the examples the address and vocative terms are coreferential. It is clear that some of the terms of address and third person reference may also occur as vocatives, but there are certain cooccurrence restrictions, which are probably best handled as textual rather than (sentence) syntax. The use of the same word both as address and vocative seems grammatical, although not acceptable. Pronouns can only be used as vocatives if they are also used for address. A well-known slang example, exceptional because of its repeated occurrences of vocative du, is Hör du, du du! (Do you hear, you, you?)

We will not investigate these problems further here, but we will note that expressions of vocative follow the same degrees of formality as terms of address and third person reference.

#### Summary and conclusions

The terms of address, third person reference and the vocative be derived with reasonable success from the dimensions of power and solidarity, and the overall pattern can be displayed by power-solidarity diagrams. The dimensions and their combinations have to be made concrete and interpreted for different languages and cultures.

A scale of formality with five steps (+2,+1,0,-1,-2) can be derived from the dimensions of power and solidarity and the steps seem to correspond to important linguistic distinctions. The step +2, the highest formality is found only with very important persons (gods, devils, royalty) and generally manifested in very special ways including taboo and avoidance. The level +1 is found in normal polite and respectful behaviour. The level -1 corresponds to friendship, and -2 to behaviour with small dear friends, such as children and pets. V is the general pronoun of plus values, T the pronoun of minus values. If the formality value is 0, hostile languages would substitute +1 and use V, while guest languages would substitute -1 and use T. The handling of strangers is crucial for the distinction between hostile and guest languages.

The terms of address, reference and the vocative are not just passive reflexes of the attitudes of society. They may be used

actively to promote certain values such as solidarity and equality, respect and individuality (inequality). The effect of intentional reforms in the address or reference system may, however, fade away when the contrasting situation is forgotten. The use of Du will only be felt as a token of equality and friendship as long as it contrasts with previous usage and is not available for everybody.

Levelling in the terms of address in a language, e g in English you, should not be taken as evidence of equality and lack of formality. Differences may instead be reflected in the vocative (as in the English use of sir) and third person reference. The two underlying factors power and solidarity seem to be fundamental to society and language must be expected to offer means of showing the existence or non-existence of power and solidarity, but these means may differ.

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