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Terms of Address: A Contrastive Investigation of Ongoing Changes in British, American and Indian English and in German

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Abstract

Address terms are closely related to the conceptualisation of hierarchical relations in a speech community, so, since – at least in Western societies – tendencies towards a flattening of hierarchies have been noted (cf. Mair, 2006), we expect changes in this domain. Some evidence has been produced for German, American and British English, but empirical insights on address choice in Indian English are lacking to date. As it tends to be a conservative variety (cf. e.g. Collins, 2012), we might expect resistance to change.

The study makes a novel use of discourse completion tasks to investigate ongoing change using an ‘apparent-time’ approach. Our findings support the view of Indian English as conservative and of American English as changing most clearly towards informalisation, visible in the increasing use of informal attention getters (*hey!*). However, evidence of recent change is otherwise not as pronounced as expected and actually absent regarding pronoun choice in German.

Keywords

address terms – politeness – democratisation – recent change in English and German

1 Introduction

Most societies have undergone far-reaching changes in the last couple of decades that affect, among other pragmatic features, the way we address each other. Talking about changes in English in the second half of the 20th century, Mair (2006: 1–11) sees as the most crucial changes in society that have an effect on linguistic behaviour: democratisation, a decline of overt attention to hierarchy, the globalisation of knowledge, and the globalisation of communication (e.g. internet). Among these, the most relevant developments for the topic of changing address choices seem to be the flattening of overt power hierarchies and the concomitant phenomenon of democratisation, typically understood in linguistics as a “rise of more congenial, less face threatening alternatives in a society apparently more egalitarian, democratic, and antiauthoritarian” (Farrelly & Seoane, 2012: 393). Concerning terms of address, speakers of English can choose from more formal variants (last names with title, title only) and more informal ones (first names, kinship terms, e.g. *uncle*, familiarisers, e.g. *folks* or endearment terms, e.g. *darling*). In German, similar variants exist and speakers additionally need to choose between the familiar and the formal pronoun of address (*Du* vs *Sie*).

The fact that numerous changes related to democratisation and declining attention to hierarchies have been observed in various varieties of English (e.g. Baker, 2010; Loureiro-Porto, 2020; Diaconu, 2015) and, to a lesser extent, in German (e.g. Kretzenbacher, 2010; Clyne, Norrby & Warren, 2009) allows us to hypothesise that choices of address terms will also prove to be sensitive to these ongoing broader sociocultural changes, with speakers of younger generations increasingly opting for informal variants where older speakers choose formal ones. Furthermore, different speech communities will be affected to different extents. Even though similar developments in terms of flattening of hierarchies and democratisation can be observed in Germany, the UK, and the US, the two different major L1 varieties of English are likely to behave somewhat differently, as previous studies on other phenomena have suggested (cf. e.g. Flöck, 2016 for pragmatic contrasts between British and American English, House, 1996; 2008; Kranich, 2016 for English-German pragmatic contrasts). Global varieties of English will contain additional particularities, especially if one takes a society such as the one in India, which is typically associated with a greater attention to hierarchy than Western societies (cf. e.g. Chhokar, 2000).

The present paper thus situates itself at a crossroad of micro-diachronic pragmatics, contrastive pragmatics, and variational pragmatics, as it aims to shed light on recent changes comparing the situations in Germany, the UK, the US, and India. The research is part of a larger project that investigates ongoing

change in recent decades that may be related to democratisation. Our data come foremost from discourse completion tasks (DCTs) which are designed to test the effect of the presence or absence of hierarchical differences between speaker and addressee on linguistic choices. This data is supplemented with interviews on changing hierarchies with younger and older informants from the UK and from Germany. After some more details about the background assumptions about sociocultural changes affecting recent language change in the different speech communities under investigation, we present an overview of relevant previous research on address terms. We then explain our methodology and data collection, before presenting and discussing our quantitative and qualitative findings. Our tentative conclusions will be supplemented by an outlook on what remains to be done in view of our larger goal of finding out more about how the flattening of hierarchies and democratisation affect pragmatic conventions.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 *Democratisation, Globalisation, and the Decline of Overt Hierarchies*

Sociocultural changes in the speech communities under consideration are characterised to a certain extent by similar processes: democratisation, globalisation, and a flattening of traditional hierarchies in society (cf. Culpeper & Nevala, 2012: 373–381 on democratisation). The 1968 revolution was most relevant for Western cultures, such as the US, the UK, and Germany, but, through globalisation and the large-scale export of US culture, affected other areas of the world as well with a certain time lag. Steinacker and Sünker (2010) describe the revolution of '68 as an anti-authoritarian movement with the declared aim to achieve a democratisation of all areas of life and a participation of everyone in all important decisions (2010: 25–26). Even though more recently, a counter trend can be seen in various forms of a “right-wing anti-globalisation movement” (Macgregor-Bowles & Bowles, 2017: 140) (e.g. Trump, Modi, PEGIDA, and AfD), which tend to advocate the restoration of conservative hierarchies (e.g. idealisation of traditional gender roles), the overall tendency in mainstream discourse can still be seen as one that has been increasingly stressing the importance of equality, participation, and anti-discrimination, while overt attention towards traditional hierarchies has been becoming less important and less socially desirable in many social circles. This is not to say that speakers have necessarily become more equality-oriented in their attitudes, but rather that conventions of what is socially desirable and acceptable to express have changed (e.g. in an interaction between boss

and employee in the 1950s, power differences would have been stressed overtly through more linguistic choices than today – which does not mean that the power imbalance no longer exists today, but rather that it remains more covert). Culpeper and Nevala (2012: 372) have stressed that “[l]anguage and social contexts influence one another, and together constitute social processes”, so that linguistic repercussions of the changes described above should be seen as highly likely, especially with respect to markers that are particularly sensitive to power imbalances, such as the linguistic conventions in selecting the appropriate terms of address.

The choice of the four different speech communities for the present investigation has been motivated by the assumption that both cultural factors and properties of the linguistic system will have an impact on choices of address terms. We thus selected two different languages (one with a T/V distinction in pronouns of address, one without) and speech communities found to be in the lead of changes connected to democratisation, i.e. American English (AmE), plus the other major L1 variety of English, British English (BrE), which has been shown to be more conservative, and an L2 variety which has been observed to be particularly conservative in previous studies, i.e. Indian English (IndE) (cf. e.g. Collins, 2009; 2012). Democratisation has most often been linked to developments in Western cultures; however, there are exceptions. Okamoto (2010: 88, 90) for instance, links the changing use of honorifics in Japan to democratisation. Diaconu (2015: 146) addresses the idea of democratisation in the context of modal use in Jamaican English, saying that it is “suggestive of a possible democratization in language [...] in the outer circle.” Other studies have also found evidence of colloquialisation in ESL varieties (cf. e.g. Lange, 2012: 47 for Indian English; Loureiro-Porto, 2020 for various global ESL varieties), which, according to Farrelly and Seoane (2012: 393), represents one of the three elements of linguistic democratisation.

Previous studies from our own project using (partly) the same data as the present study have already shown some interesting differences between German and English as well as among the three varieties of English investigated, looking at the use of modals and the use of request strategies in English (Kranich, Hampel & Bruns, 2020), while Kranich, Bruns & Hampel (forthc.) add a contrastive perspective by comparing requests in the three varieties of English with German. Indian English stood out as the most conservative variety, e.g. most frequently using modals that have been shown to be on the decline in other varieties of English. With respect to requests, both Indian English speakers and older German speakers were more direct than speakers of British and American English, especially in situations where they were in the power position. However, younger German speakers behaved more similarly to British

and American speakers by choosing more indirect strategies. This finding shows that the established pragmatic contrasts between English and German, e.g. in terms of a greater preference for directness among German speakers and a greater preference for indirectness among English speakers (cf. e.g. House, 1996) do not seem to hold anymore for younger speakers because of recent change in German conventions. Our British data did not show changes concerning preferred request strategies. In the interview data used in Kranich et al. (forthc.) (as well as in the present study) however, both German and British informants stated that they feel that a flattening of hierarchy structures has occurred during their life time. The current study will investigate to what extent such changes in hierarchy structures affect address terms.

2.2 Previous Research on Terms of Address in English

Address “denotes a speaker’s linguistic reference to his/her collocutor(s)” (Braun, 1988: 7). Address terms may be used to start a conversation (i.e. as *Alerter*, cf. Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) but also occur in other places and for other functions in the interaction. The way we use address, and how we speak with other people, is an incredibly important factor in defining, “establishing and maintaining social relationships” (Norrry & Wide, 2015: 2). Choice of address is strongly influenced by one’s own social and linguistic background and includes an assessment of the relationship with the interaction partner, making it a particularly suitable topic for sociolinguistic studies (Formentelli, 2009: 179).

Most commonly, for English and German, two types of address terms are distinguished: pronouns and nouns, i.e. names, titles, etc. (Clyne et al., 2009: 37). While in present-day English, the address pronoun is invariably *you*, in German we find a T/V distinction (cf. e.g. Brown & Gilman, 1960; Simon, 2003), i.e. *Du* vs *Sie*, with *Sie* being the more formal form (*Ihr* vs *Sie* in the plural). Nominal address terms in English and German usually consist of a combination of title and last name (TT¹ + LN, e.g. *Mr Shakespeare*) or usage of the first name (FN, e.g. *William*); but one also finds endearment terms (e.g. *dear*), or other relational terms, such as kinship terms (e.g. *Dad*). Kinship terms can also be used as a form of relationship signaller between people who are not actually related, e.g. *Bro*.

1 Typically, *title* is abbreviated as ‘T’ (e.g. Brown and Gilman, 1960 talk about T + LN, not TT + LN), however, the informal dimension of the pronouns is also abbreviated as ‘T’ (as in the commonly used description of the T/V distinction). Therefore, the term *title* will be abbreviated as ‘TT’ in this paper. An overview of all abbreviations used for the categories distinguished in this paper can be found in Table 2.

In one of the first systematic studies on salutation, Brown and Gilman (1960) identified power and solidarity as the main factors in the choice of a form of address. However, older influential studies such as Brown and Gilman (1960), Brown and Ford (1961), and Braun (1988) have been criticised for making too bold claims on the basis of a slim database (e.g. Clyne et al., 2009: 15), and neglecting further potentially significant factors, e.g., situational variables (formal/informal), differences in power structures, speaker characteristics such as age and gender, the medium, social networks, perceptions of common ground, style, and even individual preference (cf. Norrby & Wide, 2015: 2–5, Clyne et al., 2009: 18; even the price range of the restaurant in which server-customer interactions take place has been shown to have an effect, cf. Staley 2018).

Brown and Ford (1961: 375) state that, in AmE, “English forms of address are reasonably well described by a single binary contrast: FN or [TT + LN]”. The TT + LN forms used, as well as the use of titles as honorifics (e.g. *Sir*) typically “express formality and distance towards addressees of high social status” (Formentelli, 2009: 182). However, they might also function as solidarity terms when used within friendships, where they may be used to “express camaraderie” (2009: 182). The use of honorific titles (e.g. *sir*, *madam*) is described as “uncommon strategy”, as “respect towards an addressee is rarely marked [...] in present-day English”. Exceptions may be service encounters where “an older customer may well be addressed” with an honorific (Leech, 1999: 112). Using the first name is described as not only normal for personal relationships (e.g. friends) but also for colleagues, while an important social contrastive function is attested to the choice of FN vs TT + LN, comparable to the T/V distinction found in other languages (e.g. German) (Leech, 1999: 112). In languages where the pronominal T/V distinction is present, the T forms are typically combined with first names, while the V-pronouns are used with titles and last names.

Concerning recent change, Leech (1999: 114) speaks of “a progressive familiarization of addressing and naming habits in the English-speaking world” based on a corpus of speech that mostly includes “domestic use of language”. While British English exhibited a greater number of kin terms, AmE was in the lead concerning “a more extreme trend toward familiarization in American usage” (Leech, 1999: 114), with a high number of familiarisers as well as a higher number of familiarised first names. One might expect this trend to potentially find reflection in more recent British usage, as “[r]ecent developments in British English address practices [are] possibly influenced by patterns in American English” (Clyne et al., 2009: 4). Other studies on address in AmE have also shown this trend towards familiarisation, i.e. increasing use of first names, also for example in business contexts (e.g. Brown & Ford, 1961; Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Murray, 2002).

Fewer studies exist on address in British English. Exceptions are Formentelli (2009) and Baker (2010). Formentelli (2009) investigated salutation in a conservative academic environment, based on a relatively small sample (23 participants). Interestingly, especially younger British students exhibited uncertainties regarding the salutation of lecturers (e.g. TT + LN vs FN), reflected in avoidance strategies, which can be seen as evidence of changing conventions. Baker's (2010) corpus-based study focuses on choice of titles regarding gender. Comparing four corpora containing data from 1931 to 2006, his most important finding is that the use of titles is decreasing (2010: 143), which he links to the fact that first name address becomes more prevalent (2010: 143–144). Linking his findings to Mair's (2006) idea of democratisation and colloquialisation, Baker interprets this as “a move towards non-sexist language, a move towards more informal, equal and colloquial ways of addressing people and a (slight) reflection of the decrease of marriage in society” (Baker, 2010: 144).

Concerning Indian English, norms can be expected to differ compared to the other two varieties, since “address/reference terms are drawn from both Indian languages as well as English”, which can serve as an indication of the whole conversation conforming more to English or traditional Indian norms (Pandharipande, 1992: 244). The use of English terms can indicate “social distance (in terms of an asymmetric power relationship or unfamiliarity) between the speaker and the hearer in certain kinds of contexts” and “distances the utterance from the underlying Indian conventions of appropriateness by marking the context of the utterance as special” (1992: 245). For instance, the title *sir* might be used with a stranger who is in a respect position, while an Indian term, e.g. Sanskrit *swami*, might be used with a more familiar person in the same power position (1992: 246).

2.3 *Research on German and Its Contrasts to English*

Contrastive pragmatic research on English and German in the last decades has all in all confirmed the robustness of the five dimensions of pragmatic contrasts proposed by House (e.g. 1996, for a recent research overview of this field, see Kranich, 2016). For our present purpose, the dimensions of content-orientation (more typical of German) vs addressee-orientation (more typical of English) is the most relevant one. Greater attention to the addressee may make English speakers more likely to use terms of address that belong to the spectrum of solidarity markers / positive politeness markers (e.g. *darling*, *love*, *mate*), in order to create a positive relationship with the interlocutor.

Apart from the T/V distinction, address patterns in German offer similar options to speakers as English, and the choices of the use of FN vs TT + LN are largely governed by similar considerations. However, the progression

concerning more informality and solidarity as shown for the English language might not hold for the German language, at least not to the same extent. Clyne, Kretzenbacher, Norrby and Schüpbach (2006: 314), for instance, assume that changes of this kind might actually be of a cyclical nature, a point of view which is supported by Stickel (2004: 21), who states that during the 1960s, people have started to use the T-pronoun *Du* more often, but that since then, this trend has been partially reversed.

Still, not many empirical studies on address choices can be found, perhaps due to a tendency in research on German not to focus as much on the cultural and pragmatic implications of language (cf. Günthner, 2017: 2–3). The studies that do exist show some evidence of change towards less formal use. Thus, Clyne et al. (2009) report that the use of address with titles in German and other European languages has been declining due to the student movement in the 1960s. Stickel (2004: 20) reports that use of the V form *Sie* was more prominent until the 1960s – its decline coinciding with the decline of title forms. Stickel (2004: 20) describes it as the default form between strangers and students up to that point. After that, the typical solidarity form, at least between students and generally between younger people, became *Du* (2004: 21), though Stickel concedes that the spread of *Du* slowed down in the '70s/'80s. Hickey (2003: 422) even argues that the change towards more T-usage following the student revolts in the 1960s was mostly reversed during the 1980s and that the German address system now upholds the V-pronoun use as the norm again.

The variety of factors that can have an impact on pronoun choice has also been noted in research on German. Kretzenbacher (2010) recognises the fuzzy boundaries in actual usage concerning pronoun choice. For instance, in the professional sphere, the choice of T- or V-pronouns is more dependent on field than on the classical rules of social distance or power (2010: 6–7), though all in all reciprocal *Sie* seems to be most common in the working environment (Kretzenbacher, 2010: 13). Other factors relevant for pronoun choice in German noted are status, hierarchy, age, common ground, or a “shared living-reality”, i.e. the notion of similarities between people which leads to the use of the T-pronoun (2010: 11). This might be related to the solidarity factor mentioned earlier and also to familiarity (2010: 11).

The plural pronoun *Ihr*, which is the plural form of the T-pronoun *Du*, can be used as a compromise to address groups in which there are people usually addressed with both pronouns – this plural pronoun therefore lost its exclusiveness as plural pronoun for the T-pronoun (Kretzenbacher, 2010: 15; see also Hickey, 2003: 409 for a discussion on the appropriateness of using *Ihr* for such mixed groups), which is a good indicator for the fact that the binary distinction might not be completely sufficient in everyday life. Studies on address terms

beyond the T/V distinction are even rarer. Günthner (2017: 24) presents some findings, e.g. that in the younger generation, relational terms such as *bro* are also used in German.

To our knowledge, contrastive pragmatic studies that compare German and English in actual use of forms of address are completely lacking to date, so that the present study represents an important step in closing this gap.

3 Methods

The data for this study comes from a questionnaire with a DCT originally designed to elicit requests for the studies in Kranich et al. (2020; *forthc.*), but as we investigated the linguistic elements that were used within these requests more closely, the frequent use of terms of address and their apparent variation attracted our interest and turned out to be so numerous as to warrant an analysis in their own right. The situations which were used in the DCTs furthermore are well suited for considering the impact of different interlocutor relations on the choice of address terms. Firstly, the situations vary with respect to power differences (P) between the interlocutors, which is important as hierarchical differences and their changing perception are at the core of our research interest; secondly, the situations vary concerning the weight of imposition of the request (W), which may be a good way of finding out more about the impact of less stable, more situational factors; and finally and crucially for the present purpose, the situations portray a wide variety of different interlocutor-combinations, which allow us to capture the whole spectrum of possible address terms described in the beginning of section 2.2. The situations were distributed as follows:²

- Sit. 1 (S and H: Two colleagues) and 2 (S: Wife; H: Husband): –P –W
- Sit. 3 (S: Boss; H: Several employees) and 4 (S: Boss, H: One employee): +P –W
- Sit. 5 (S and H: Friends) and 6 (S and H: Neighbours): –P +W
- Sit. 7 (S: Employee; H: Boss) and 8 (S: Daughter; H: Father): +P +W

While DCTs are clearly not the most naturalistic data (since people need to imagine the situation and written communication is used to convey something that would usually be said orally and spontaneously), the fact that it is

2 –P represents situations in which no power distance is indicated, while in +P situations, there is a power difference between the interlocutors (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2011: 71). In situation 3 and 4, the person in power was the requester, in situation 7 and 8, the person in power was the one of whom something was requested. –W represents situations in which there was only a small imposition to the hearer while +W situations are those in which there is a big weight of imposition posed on the hearer.

data that is “likely to be [...] idealized, i.e., what the subject thinks he or she should say” (Walker, 2013: 451) is a positive feature in the context of the present study: if people fill in what they believe is appropriate in this situation, it will give us an idea of what they perceive as the polite norm. While the results to be found through this kind of data collection likely do not show the actual usage patterns, they can establish a baseline for what can be considered the norm in a given culture. DCTs are widely used in cross-cultural pragmatic studies and are a particularly suited instrument since it provides the means to investigate cross-cultural contrasts in a controlled fashion (cf. Ogiermann, 2018: 229). The structured contrasts between different speech situations in the DCTs is another benefit for the current study, as it allows us to determine the impact of different factors better than studying naturally occurring data might, so “[a]lthough DCT responses do not fully resemble naturally occurring data, the administrative advantages make the DCT a valuable and effective data collection method” (Ogiermann, 2018: 229).

Address terms are used in this data in different ways: either as a kind of Alerter (i.e. where the informants feel they need to attract the attention of the hearer in the DCT scenario) or as vocative without Alerter function. The kind of address term used can give insights on politeness norms (e.g. use of TT + LN as negative politeness form, use of FN as positive politeness form) and how these terms are used within different power structures.³

In addition, this study makes use of interviews with younger and older British and German informants, which are, due to the early stage of the project, still limited in number (n = 7), but can serve to add some qualitative insights.

3.1 Data Collection

The DCT goes back to a study by Kranich and Schramm (2015),⁴ but was adapted for the current study to assure appropriateness for all investigated varieties (e.g. changing spelling and culturally determined terms). The entire questionnaire and explanations on the changes can be found in the Appendix. The questionnaires were distributed online⁵ to speakers of American (AmE),

3 While the DCT used in this study does serve its purpose quite well, optimisation of the format should definitely occur in the future of this project. Changes in the DCT design will include the removal of rejoinders, the addition of more scenarios which explicitly target the perception of certain gendered expectations as well as more formats prompting the production of address terms.

4 The situations were adapted from requests that occurred in popular, relatively realistic British and German soap operas (*Eastenders*, *Lindenstraße*).

5 Participants were recruited using private emails, Facebook, and Prolific. We asked native speakers among our friends and acquaintances of the languages / varieties to complete and

TABLE 1 DCT Participants

	AmE		BrE		IndE		Ger		Total
	Older	Younger	Older	Younger	Older	Younger	Older	Younger	
Participants	30	31	30	30	21	30	30	30	232
Responses	233	246	237	240	164	236	239	233	1828

British (BrE), and Indian English (IndE) as well as to speakers of German (Ger) who were living in Germany. Some British English and German speakers filled out print versions of the questionnaire. 232 participants answered the questionnaire, with a total of 1828 answers. All in all, 541 address terms were counted in the data. For each variety, participants came from two age groups: 18 to 31 years, and 47 to 86 years old. While AmE and BrE as well as Ger speakers were all native speakers, IndE speakers were mostly second-language speakers.⁶

3.2 Coding

First, all terms of address used in the data were extracted. We then distinguished between Alerters and non-alerters. Alerters are “element[s] whose function it is to alert the Hearer’s attention to the ensuing speech act” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 277). Terms of address may be used as Alerter, but also occur in other functions. Furthermore, Alerters will not necessarily take the form of a term of address, but could also be a different type of attention getter, e.g. greeting or exclamation (see Table 2). Furthermore, for the German data it is important to note whether a pronoun is used as Alerter or as regular pronoun; pronouns were therefore coded within the Alerter category only when they appeared in this function (e.g. *Hey Du*). While for English, non-alerter pronouns were not further considered in the study (as *you* is invariably used, showing no socially-determined variation), for German, we counted all pronouns of address in order to be able to see whether informants varied in their choice of a T- or V-pronoun.

then to spread the questionnaire among their friends and so on, i.e. using a snowball system. The participants recruited this way are, to a large extent, well-educated speakers (students, speakers with a college degree), but not exclusively so. The groups are comparable in their make-up concerning education and gender distribution.

6 Participants from India noted overall 18 different native languages: Angami, Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Khasi, Khezha, Malayalam, Marathi, Mizo, Nepali, Odia, Tamil, Telugu, Tulu, and Urdu.

TABLE 2 Categories used in the analysis

Categories		Example
Attention Getter	AtG	
Greetings	<i>AtG_G</i>	Hi, Hey, Hallo
Apologies	<i>AtG_A</i>	Sorry, Excuse me
Requests for attention	<i>AtG_RA</i>	Listen, sag mal
Exclamation	<i>AtG_E</i>	Ah, oh, okay
Hesitation marker	<i>AtG_HM</i>	Ach, well, um
Pronoun	Pr	
Definite	<i>Pr_D</i>	Du, you, Sie
Indefinite	<i>Pr_I</i>	Everyone
Indefinite combined	<i>Pr_IC</i>	You all
First Name	FN	Susanne, Susie, Michael, Mike
Last Name	LN	Smith, Müller
Endearment Term	ET	
Actual endearment	<i>ET_A</i>	honey, babe, Schatz
Friendship term / “familiariser”	<i>ET_F</i>	dude, Da (IndE), guys, folks
Kinship Term	KT	
No kinship relation	<i>KT_NR</i>	Bro
Family terms	<i>KT_AR</i>	intimate to less intimate: Dad, Daddy, Father
Relationship Terms	RT	e.g. Freundin, husband
Title	TT	
Role	<i>TT_R</i>	boss, Chef, liebe Mitarbeiter
Title	<i>TT_GT</i>	Frau, Herr, Mr., Ms.
Honorific	<i>TT_H</i>	Sir, Damen und Herren

Table 2 gives a complete overview of all categories and subcategories we distinguished based on combining insights from the typologies and observations found in the literature (Aijmer & Elgemark, 2013; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Bonsignori, Bruti & Masi, 2012; Braun, 1988; De Leeuw, 2007; Formentelli, 2009; Leech, 1999; Staley, 2018; Suszczyńska, 1999; Van Olmen, 2010).

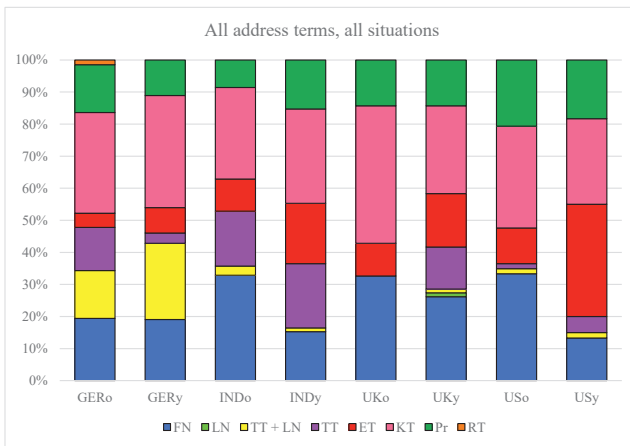
4 Results

We will first take a look at the broad picture of the use of address terms in general, then we will turn our attention to Alerters and Attention Getters and

will compare to what extent German differs from English and how the three varieties of English differ from each other. We will end with observations on German, focusing on the selection of the T/V-pronouns in the different contexts of use provided in the DCTs.

4.1 *Terms of Address in Varieties of English and German*

In general, all types of address terms occur in the data, but with different frequencies in the different varieties. What is particularly noticeable is that German uses more TT+LN than any of the English varieties, thus showing a preference for more formal terms of address. By contrast, the English varieties have in common a more frequent use of terms of endearment (ET), as we expected based on the general tendency towards greater addressee orientation in English.



	GERo	GERy	INDo	INDy	UKo	UKy	USo	USy	Total
RT	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pr	10	7	6	13	7	12	13	11	79
KT	21	22	20	25	21	23	20	16	168
ET	3	5	7	16	5	14	7	21	78
TT	9	2	12	17	0	11	1	3	55
TT + LN	10	15	2	1	0	1	1	1	31
LN	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
FN	13	12	23	13	16	22	21	8	128
Total	67	63	70	85	49	84	63	60	541

FIGURE 1 Overview of all terms of address in the data (Alerters and non-alerters)

Concerning formality, Indian English stands out among the varieties investigated by making the most common use of titles on their own (TT), especially honorifics (TT_H), due to the frequent use of *Sir* in the Indian data, as exemplified in Example (1).

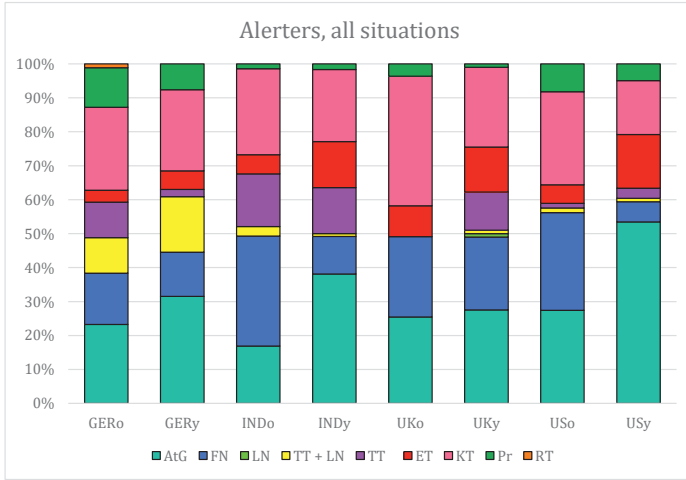
- (1) Sir, i know i agreed to work on Saturday night, but i have not been able to get a baby sitter. I cant leave my daughter alone. Please give me saturday night off? [...] (IND001, Sit. 7)

Figure 2 presents our findings on Alerters. Alerters always stand at the very front of the request to be made. The use of the address term *sir* in example (1) thus represents an instance of address term as Alerter. Example (2) shows a typical use of a non-address term used as Alerter, as instances with *Hey* and *Hi* are frequently found.

- (2) Hey, can you watch my daughter at lunch time? [...] (USy29, Sit. 5)

It is clear that when it comes to Alerters across situations, Attention Getters (AtG) are used relatively frequently. This is especially true for younger AmE speakers, but also in general, younger speakers use them more often than older speakers of the same variety. Another interesting observation is that the second person singular pronoun (Pr_D) seems to serve as Alerter only in German (and only the T-variant *Du*). This means that the use of *Du* in German seems to be accepted as strategy to gather the addressee's attention (cf. also Hickey, 2003: 419), while something like *you*, or even a combination of *hey you*, cannot be found in the data, even though the usage of it seems possible (though it might be perceived as somewhat rude, which is probably why our informants refrained from its use). English does make use of pronouns as Alerters, but these are indefinite pronouns (Pr_I) or indefinite combinations (Pr_IC) such as *everyone* and *you all*. Figure 3 shows interesting differences in the frequencies of use of Alerters.

In the English varieties, the younger speakers show a somewhat higher use of Alerters, which to a large extent reflects their more frequent use of *Hey* and *Hi*. These two items represent the most frequently used AtG in the data. The fact that Indian English, on the other hand, represents the variety with the highest Alerter use overall also has to do with the fact that the use of *Sir* to introduce a request in a formal situation (e.g. talking to one's boss, as in Example (1)) is especially common in this variety, particularly with regard to the older group of Indian speakers, who do not make frequent use of *Hey* or *Hi*.



	GERo	GERy	INDo	INDy	UKo	UKy	USo	USy	Total
RT	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pr	10	7	1	2	2	1	6	5	34
KT	21	22	18	25	21	23	20	16	166
ET	3	5	4	16	5	13	4	16	66
TT	9	2	11	16	0	11	1	3	53
TT + LN	9	15	2	1	0	1	1	1	30
LN	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
FN	13	12	23	13	13	21	21	6	122
AtG	20	29	12	45	14	27	20	54	221
Total	86	92	71	118	55	98	73	101	694

FIGURE 2 Alerters used (across all situations)

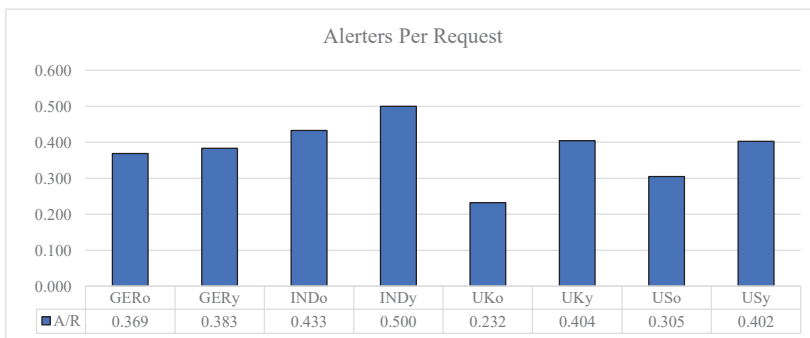
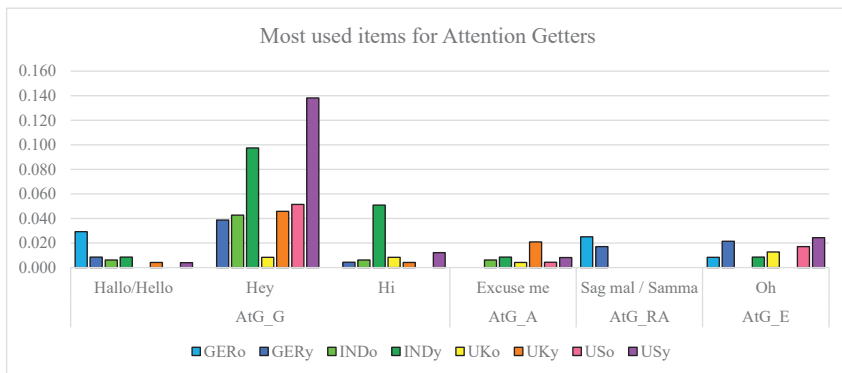


FIGURE 3 Number of Alerters used per request (across all situations)

Figure 4 shows clearly that the common use of *Hey* and *Hi* is to an overwhelming extent due to the frequent use of these forms by younger speakers, most notably young US-American and Indian English speakers.

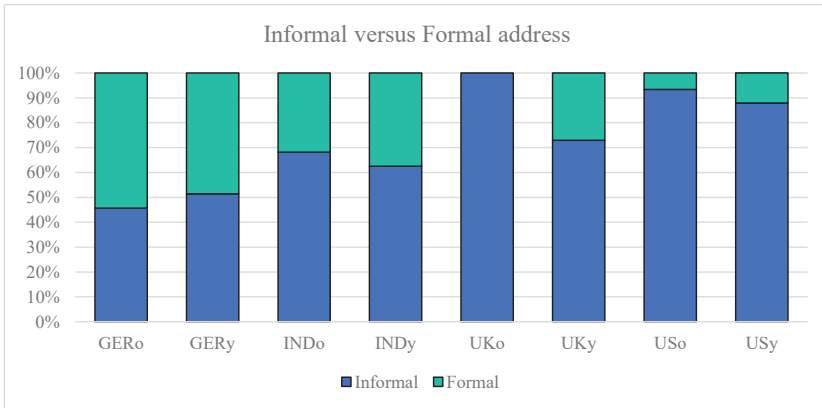
The Greeting strategy (AtG_G) *Hey* and its frequent occurrence in the data of younger speakers relates to our hypothesis concerning colloquialisation and supports this hypothesis in two ways: it is younger speakers who prefer this informal strategy, and it is in particular US-American speakers i.e. the variety that has generally been assumed to be in the lead when it comes to colloquialisation (cf. e.g. Collins, 2012). Young Americans are followed, in contrast to our predictions, by young Indian English speakers in the second position, who do not behave conservatively at all in this respect.

A closer look at the use of formal and informal forms of address overall confirms the view of US-Americans being in the lead in their choice of informal strategies. However, interestingly, they are surpassed by British older speakers in the data, who have, all in all, chosen the fewest terms of address, but only selected informal ones.



GERo	7	0	0	0	6	2
GERy	2	9	1	0	4	5
INDo	1	7	1	1	0	0
INDy	2	23	12	2	0	2
UKo	0	2	2	1	0	3
UKy	1	11	1	5	0	0
USo	0	12	0	1	0	4
USy	1	34	3	2	0	6

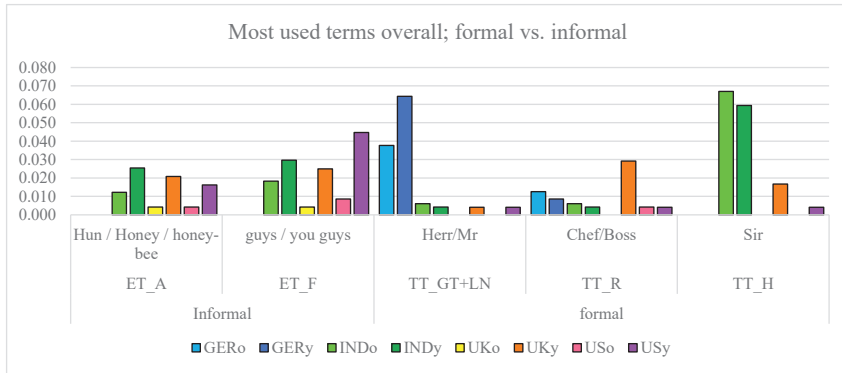
FIGURE 4 Six most used items in Attention Getters, sorted for variety and age (numbers are normalised per request in graph and given as total numbers in table)



	GERo	GERy	INDo	INDy	UKo	UKy	USo	USy	Total
Formal	19	17	14	18	0	13	2	4	87
Informal	16	18	30	30	21	35	28	29	207
Total	35	35	44	48	21	48	30	33	294

FIGURE 5 Informal versus formal address terms, across all situations
 Note: Counted for this Figure were for Informal: FN, ET, KT_NR; Formal: TT, LN; pronoun usage was not counted as formal versus informal, since it is addressed elsewhere for German in the T/V distinction, and might not be recognised as either formal or informal in English (e.g. *everyone / you all* might count as informal but cannot be contrasted with a formal alternative).

From a contrastive pragmatic point of view, we see a clear contrast between German and English. German speakers make a much more common use of formal terms of address, as we already pointed out with regard to the more detailed Figure 1 at the beginning of this section, where we noted that German speakers use TT + LN as opposed to first names much more commonly. An additional factor influencing this broad picture is that the use of endearment terms is less wide-spread among our German informants. If we take a look at the most commonly used term of address in each variety, this becomes obvious: for both AmE and BrE, it is the informal term *you guys* that appears the most frequent overall, while for IndE it is, as already mentioned, the formal term *Sir*. German as well has as its most common choice a formal variant, i.e. *Herr* + LN (24 instances, 9 instances in the older, 15 instances in the younger group), while none of the English varieties exhibits a common choice of *Mr* + LN. All English varieties use variants of the endearment term *honey/hun* (and other endearment terms), while in German, endearment terms were rarer



GERo	0	0	9	3	0
GERy	0	0	15	2	0
INDo	2	3	1	1	11
INDy	6	7	1	1	14
UKo	1	1	0	0	0
UKy	5	6	1	7	4
USo	1	2	0	1	0
USy	4	11	1	1	1

FIGURE 6 Formal versus informal use: Five most used terms overall, sorted for variety and age (numbers are normalised per request in graph and given as total numbers in table)

Note: The category FN was excluded here. While it is the most used category of informal address terms, the actual names used in this category vary widely (e.g. *Mary, Pushpa, Julia*, or the place holder “Name”).

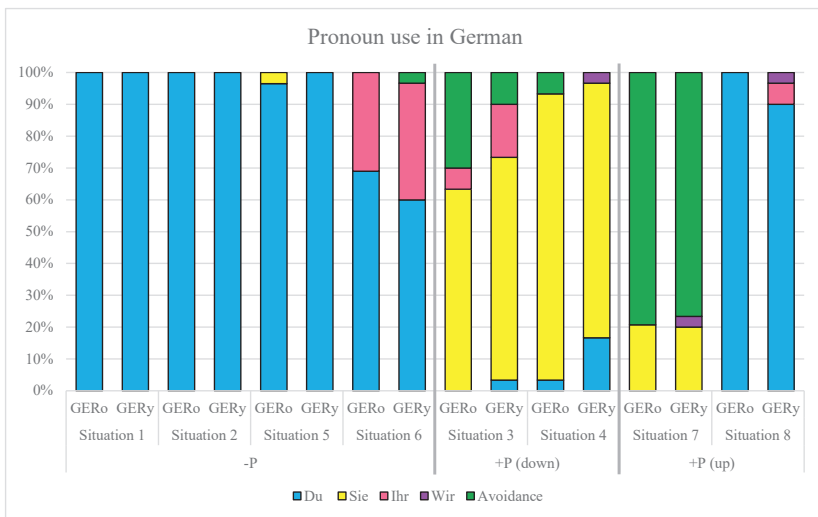
(6 times *Schatz*, each age group 3 times, and once *Mausi*), which may be linked to a greater content- and lesser addressee-orientation of German speakers.

4.2 The T/V Distinction in German

As can be gathered from Figure 7, the results of the analysis of whether people prefer to use the T-pronoun *Du* or the V-pronoun *Sie* in German is very much context-dependent. Within the same situation, however, most German participants choose the same option, i.e. they do not exhibit uncertainties in the way that Formentelli’s (2009) British student informants did.

Situations 1, 2, 5, 6, and 8 seem to demand the familiar pronoun *Du*, i.e. colleagues, spouses, neighbours and friends are addressed this way. Only situations 3 and 4, where one has to address one or several employees, favour *Sie*. If there is an address pronoun present in situation 7, where one addresses one’s boss,

it is also mostly *Sie*. However, the strategy of avoidance is the one used most often in this situation. In situation 6, another usage of pronouns also occurs relatively often, which is that of *Ihr*, i.e. the plural form of the T-variant – this has to do with the fact that a lot of people, especially from the younger group, seemed to imagine that the friend, whom one has to ask whether one can stay at their place, has housemates. Most of these findings are not very surprising. Only with respect to situation 1, one might have expected more variation, as it represents a situation between colleagues of the same power structure, but both older and younger German speakers use exclusively the pronoun *Du* here. This may, however, have to do with the fact that it is a colleague one is friendly with – after all, informants were required to imagine that it would be ok to ask the colleague in question to get them some lunch while they fetch some for



Ger	Sit. 1		Sit. 2		Sit. 5		Sit. 6		Sit. 3		Sit. 4		Sit. 7		Sit. 8		Total
	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	
Avoidance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	3	2	0	23	23	0	0	61
Wir	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Ihr	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	11	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	29
Sie	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	19	21	27	24	6	6	0	0	104
Du	30	30	28	29	28	30	20	18	0	1	1	5	0	0	28	27	275
Total	30	30	28	29	29	30	29	30	30	30	30	30	29	30	28	30	472

FIGURE 7 Pronoun use in German

themselves. It is very well imaginable that asking a less well-known colleague on the same hierarchical level would have led to more variation and more *Sie* choices, at least in the older generation.

The other noteworthy finding is the high occurrence of avoidance in situation 7: The situation is characterised by +P and +W, as the speaker has to imagine themselves as an employee asking their boss to get the Saturday shift off. Three explanations are imaginable: either speakers generally tend most towards pronoun avoidance when talking to their boss, or this choice is triggered by the high weight of the situation, or the specific request makes a speaker-directed perspective (cf. Example (3)) seem more natural than a hearer-directed perspective (cf. Example (4)).

- (3) Ich habe ein Problem, ich habe am Samstagabend keine Betreuung für meine Tochter. Kann ich deshalb an diesem Abend frei haben? (GER003, Sit. 7)⁷
- (4) Da ich keine andere Möglichkeit habe möchte ich sie bitten mir Samstagabend frei zu geben. (GER021, Sit. 7)⁸

In contrast to our expectations, the data show no evidence of ongoing change in conventions concerning the choice of the T- or V-pronoun, as is evident from Figure 8.

Younger and older Germans thus make very similar choices with respect to the pronouns they use in the various situations. This may be a reflection of the time-line of the change: as our older speakers are on average 60 years old, their usage norms may already reflect the changes that have taken place in the wake of the social revolution of the late 1960s. Furthermore, the situations may have been too obvious to trigger hesitations regarding appropriate pronoun choice, which is something we intend to rectify in the follow-up to this study.

5 Discussion

The present findings show that address terms are varied and differ to a considerable extent across varieties of English and between English and German. The most obvious observation here is that Germans tend to use more TT + LN combinations, i.e. more formal variants than English speakers, who prefer

⁷ English translation: I have a problem, I have no one to watch my daughter on Saturday evening. Can I therefore have that evening off?

⁸ English translation: Since I have no other option, I would like to ask you [V-variant] to give me Saturday evening off.

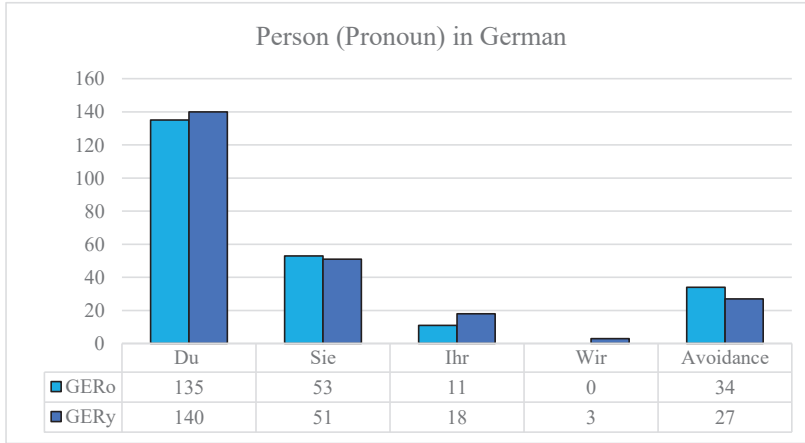


FIGURE 8 Use of pronouns in GERo vs GERy speakers across all situations (total numbers)

first names and other informal forms of address. Among the English varieties, Indian English is most likely to use formal markers, especially in the situation in which a worker talks to their boss, which frequently triggered the use of *Sir*. Combined with the observation by Pandharipande (1992: 245) that the English form of such address terms (as opposed to an Indian one) signals social distance, this shows that Indian speakers apparently tend to conform to more negative politeness norms. AmE and BrE differ less drastically, but, as in previous studies investigating colloquialisation and informalisation (e.g. Collins, 2012), American English seems to be the variety in which these trends are the most advanced. This can be seen in the overall increasing use of colloquial Alerters, such as *hey*, which is the most pronounced in the American data. In general, however, as could be gathered from Figure 5, there is no discernible trend towards a more frequent use of informal terms of address in any of the varieties / languages examined.

For German, we additionally looked at the choice of the T- and V-variant of the address pronoun. Here as well, no clear pattern of change was observable, contrary to what findings by Stickel (2004) and Norrby and Wide (2015) had led us to expect. As noted above, this result could be due to the fact that the situations are too clear-cut. In the larger follow-up study that we plan, we will thus include situations that may make pronoun choice more difficult (e.g. a colleague of the same level and age as oneself that one is hardly acquainted with; a stranger – younger, older, of the same age – in the street, etc.). Our findings do support Kretzenbacher's (2010: 13) observation, however, who says that reciprocal use of the V-variant happens most commonly in professional life, which is where we find it in our data.

In the course of this pilot study, some first interviews with British and German speakers were conducted as well (a complementary perspective on the data gathered from the DCTs that we plan to make broader use of in the follow-up study). One of the older German participants (G_O2; female, 60 years) comments on the use of the T/V-pronouns, comparing other European countries with conventions in Germany: “da [in anderen Ländern in Europa] ist eine flachere Hierarchieebene, ja, und das *Du* ist überhaupt keine Frage des Respekts vor der anderen Person, was in Deutschland meines Erachtens nach schon der Fall ist. Wenn du in Deutschland jemanden duzt, dann würde sich einer aus meiner Generation oder noch älter sagen: Okay, das ist jetzt ein bisschen strange”⁹ but also comments on ongoing change saying that “ich glaube, da kommt Deutschland auch ganz, ganz langsam hin, dass es sich wirklich europäisch öffnet. Ja? Aber Deutschland ist noch sehr verbohrte in gewisser Hinsicht, glaube ich”.¹⁰ Her view of German being in a process of change that is, however, happening at a very slow pace can be linked with our quantitative findings that reflect no change between older and younger speakers: If the change is happening at a very slow pace, we might need 1) larger amounts of data and 2) more ambiguous situations in order to see it reflected in the choice of address terms in the answers to the DCTs. Our British interview partners were of diverging opinions concerning ongoing changes with regard to social hierarchies, but most British informants also remarked upon a flattening of hierarchies in the work environment and a less formal manner of interaction compared to older generations in Great Britain.

While these changes observed by our informants in their daily experience only find limited reflection in the data concerning choice of address terms, our previous studies on democratisation using the same data (Kranich et al., 2020; forthc.) did indeed bring to light findings that reflect this kind of change, especially with regard to the German data. While older German speakers, just like in the seminal studies of English-German pragmatic contrasts in the 1980s (cf. e.g. House, 1996; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), behaved much more directly than their British and American counterparts, especially when making requests towards interlocutors below them in a hierarchy, younger German informants behave in ways that do not differ significantly from the choices of British and American speakers: regardless of the presence or absence of power

9 English translation: “there [in other European countries] is a flatter hierarchy level, and the *Du* [you, T-version] is not at all a question of respecting the other person, which I believe is the case in Germany in some sense. If you are using *Du* with someone in Germany, then someone from my generation or even older would say: Okay, that’s a little strange”.

10 English translation: “I believe that Germany is very, very slowly opening up to the European way of thinking. But Germany is still very inflexible in some respect, I think”.

differences to their interlocutor, they by far prefer the choice of Conventionally Indirect Strategies. Yet in the use of address terms, no similar changes could be observed. In this respect, German remains clearly different from L1 varieties of English (while showing some similarities to Indian English conventions).

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we pursued the aim to find out more about the use of address terms in British, American, and Indian English and in German, with a specific interest in potential recent changes. The differences we found between the varieties and languages mostly go back to different preferences concerning degrees of formality: while American English speakers show the greatest preference for informal terms of address, closely followed by British speakers, both speakers of Indian English and of German prefer formal terms of address in situations where they interact professionally with interlocutors of a different hierarchical level (i.e. their boss and their employee), while the use of informal terms of address is reserved for friends, well-acquainted colleagues on the same level, neighbours, family members, and so on. This is also visible in German in the T/V-pronoun selection: the informal T-variant is mostly reserved for the latter group of interlocutors, while one is highly likely to choose the V-variant for one's boss or one's employee. In contrast to our expectations, evidence of change is relatively limited. What we did observe is that the use of informal Attention Getters, especially *hey*, is more frequent in the younger generations across languages / varieties. This may be related to an ongoing trend of informalisation. Other phenomena examined, however, do not exhibit the expected changes. Thus, the overall distribution of formal and informal choices remains relatively stable between younger and older speakers of the same language and same variety, and the same is true for the choice of T/V-pronouns in German.

Nevertheless, interviews with both British and German informants as well as previous analyses of request strategy choices in the same data (Kranich et al., 2020; forthcoming) do indicate recent pragmatic changes. As stated earlier, DCTs do not provide us with very natural data. Nor do the present results allow us to formulate conclusions on the emic perspective, e.g. we cannot say whether speakers of German may perceive the use of FN vs TT + LN differently from speakers of e.g. American English in terms of the degree of formality they associate with the two different choices. In our future investigations of this topic area, we aim to use a triangulation of different types of data: we will supplement the ones we have already combined to a limited extent in the present study, namely DCTs and interviews, with corpus-based investigations of

changes in frequency of use of relevant markers (e.g. the terms of address we have found in our DCTs) as well as questionnaires checking on our participants' attitudes (e.g. concerning hierarchies in the work place and in their private life) and on their perception of the functions of pertinent linguistic markers (such as address terms), in order to be able to correlate the choice of specific pragmatic features with attitudes that speakers of different age groups and different speech communities hold. For the analysis of the choice of address terms, we will supplement the situations in the DCTs used in the present pilot study with situations that make the selection of terms of address trickier and more ambiguous, which will allow us to dive deeper into the factors that may impact on their selection as well as, hopefully, to detect the “really, really slow” (*ganz, ganz langsam*) change that, at least according to one of our German informants, is currently going on.

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Appendix: Situations in the DCT

*English Questionnaire*¹¹

1) Chips for lunch

Worker 1 is going to pick up lunch in town, worker 2 asks her to bring some for her, too.

Worker 1: *I'm going to the chip shop to get some lunch.*¹²

Worker 2: _____

Worker 1: *No problem, I'll be back in a bit.*

2) Tyre pressure¹³

Wife (F) asks husband (M) to check the tyre pressure of their bikes.

F: _____

11 The questions in this Appendix represent the version sent out to British English participants. Changes in the questions made for the American (US) and Indian (I) versions of the questionnaire are indicated at the corresponding places.

12 US: *I'm going to the french fries stand to get some lunch.*

I: *I'm going to town to get some lunch.*

13 US: Wife (F) asks husband (M) to check the tire pressure of their bikes.

M: *Why?*

F: *Because we have a date today with the Johnson family to go on a bike trip. Don't you remember?*

I: Wife (F) asks husband (M) to pick up the car from the service center today.

M: *Why?*

F: *Because we have quite a long drive to my cousin's birthday party tomorrow, remember?*

M: *Why?*

F: *Because we have a date today with the Johnson family to go on a cycling tour. Don't you remember?*

3) Noisy office

It's really noisy in the office, so the boss asks the workers to be quiet.

Boss: _____

Other workers: *Sure, sorry.*

4) Extra plate for guest

An unannounced guest appears during dinner time. The house owner asks the domestic servant to bring another plate for the guest to join dinner.

House owner: _____

Servant: *Sure.*

5) Looking after the daughter

M asks his friend F, who he knows is really busy, to watch his little daughter at lunch time while he runs some urgent errands.

M: _____

F: *Yeah it's fine.*

M: *Are you sure?*

F: *Absolutely.*

6) Friend wants to move in

F₁ somehow lost her flat and has no place to stay at the moment. She asks her good friend F₂ if she could stay at hers for a bit until she finds a new place to stay.

F₁: _____

F₂: (*hesitation ... sighing*) *Well, we would all have to budge up a bit but don't worry, it will be okay.*¹⁴

7) The Saturday night shift

14 US & I: F₂: (*hesitation ... sighing*) *Well, we would all have to squeeze up a bit but don't worry, it will be okay.*

Female worker (F) asks her boss (M) if she could have the Saturday night shift off because she can't find a baby sitter.

F: _____

M: *Well, we will have to find a substitute then. I will take care of it later and let you know.*

8) Financing the internship¹⁵

Daughter asks her father for a monthly allowance to finance her internship in London.

Daughter: _____

Father: *Well, how much would that be?*

Daughter: *Like ... £500?*

German Questionnaire

1) Pommes zum Mittagessen

Eine Mitarbeiterin (M₁) geht in der Mittagspause in die Stadt, um sich eine Portion Pommes zu besorgen. Mitarbeiterin 2 (M₂) bittet M₁ darum, ihr welche mitzubringen.

M₁: *Ich geh mal eben zum Imbiss und hol mir ne Portion Pommes.*

M₂: _____

M₁: *Kein Problem, mach ich! Bin gleich wieder da.*

2) Reifendruck

Frau (F) bittet ihren Mann (M) am Frühstückstisch darum, die Luft in den Fahrradreifen zu überprüfen.

F: _____

M: *Wieso das denn?*

F: *Wir sind heute doch zu einer Radtour mit den Müllers verabredet!*

15 US: Daughter asks her father for a monthly allowance to finance her internship in New York.

Father: *Well, how much would that be?*

Daughter: *Like ... \$500?*

I: Daughter asks her father for a monthly allowance to finance her internship in Delhi.

Father: *Well, how much would that be?*

Daughter: *Like ... ₹ 10.000?*

3) Unruhe im Büro

Der Chef bittet seine Angestellten, die lautstark Privatgespräche führen, um Ruhe im Büro.

Chef: _____

[mehrere Mitarbeiter]: *Klar, entschuldigen Sie.*

4) Ein zweiter Teller

Als unangekündigter Besuch während des Abendessens auftaucht, bittet der Hausherr den Hausangestellten, einen zweiten Teller für den Besuch zu bringen.

Hausherr: _____

Angestellter: *Gerne*

5) Auf Tochter aufpassen

Mann (M) bittet seine Bekannte (F) (von der er weiß, dass sie selbst sehr beschäftigt ist) darum, eine Stunde lang um die Mittagszeit auf seine kleine Tochter aufzupassen, während er einige wichtige Besorgungen machen muss.

M: _____

F: *Ja, kein Problem.*

M: *Bist du sicher?*

F: *Absolut!*

6) Freundin möchte einziehen

F₁ hat ihre Wohnung verloren, erzählt es ihrer guten Freundin F₂ und fragt sie, ob sie vorübergehend in ihrer WG wohnen kann.

F₁: _____

F₂: (zögert, seufzt) *Da müssen wir ganz schön zusammenrücken alle miteinander. Aber mach' dir keine Sorgen, das bekommen wir hin.*

7) Die Samstagabendschicht

Angestellte (F) fragt bei ihrem Chef (M) an, ob sie am Samstagabend frei haben kann, weil sie niemanden finden kann, der auf ihre kleine Tochter aufpasst.

F: _____

M: *Also naja, dann müssten wir einen Ersatz für Sie finden. Ich kümmere mich später darum und sage Ihnen dann Bescheid.*

8) Das Praktikum finanzieren

Tochter (T) bittet Vater (V) darum, sie monatlich finanziell zu unterstützen, damit sie ihr Praktikum in London finanzieren kann.

T: _____

V: *Wieviel soll's denn sein?*

T: *Naja, so etwa 500€ im Monat?*