1 Introduction

The way we address one another – the use of second-person pronouns such as English 'you', first names, last names and titles – is crucial in marking social relations and is critical to human relationships. As Joseph (1989) points out, address usage encodes the relationship and attitudes of interlocutors perhaps to a greater extent than other aspects of language and is thus more open to cultural variation. It reflects cultural values and acts as an indicator of major social and political changes that affect human relationships and social networks. The study of address systems and rules thus not only has significance for linguistics but also informs research into social structures and social change.

1.1 Address across languages

This book, based on empirical data, examines changes in the address systems of three western European languages, French, German and Swedish, and to a more limited extent English. It explores the impact on these systems of sociopolitical changes and events, particularly since the 1960s. The 1960s were an important turning point not only in Europe but also in the Americas and Asia. The spirit of the time was one of social revolt and oppositional politics, which differed from country to country. Reassuringly conservative after the shock of World War II, the national cultures of Europe have been radically challenged since the 1960s, not only by the ideological divides and shifts along with new expressions of solidarity during and after the student uprisings of 1968 in western Europe, but also by the social and cultural effects of ongoing European integration, the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, globalisation, and the spread of Anglo–American cultural influence (through its single address pronoun *you*).

The effects of these developments have been felt in different ways in the countries and sites we examine here. In France and Germany, they were experienced most immediately in the universities, where students led the way in changing patterns of use of address pronouns. France experienced considerable social change in the post-68 years, but there was a gradual return to more traditional social stratification. France continues to be a stratified society in which early educational choices determine to a greater or lesser extent workplace and life opportunities. At

the same time, the broader social context is currently one in which there is a growing tendency towards individualism rather than a focus on collective concerns, as is the case in other western societies. In Germany, the end of the Cold War and the subsequent unification of West and East Germany have created a new set of sociopolitical conditions, as communist and capitalist values have come into contact. Sweden and Finland in the post-war era have been characterised politically by a strong social democrat movement, with an emphasis on egalitarianism. In addition, across Europe – and around the world – new information technologies such as email and the internet are currently having a considerable impact on language usage, particularly among the younger sections of society.

Each of the languages discussed in this book contributes a different set of issues to the way in which people are addressed. The book investigates both pronominal and nominal address in French, German and Swedish – that is, pronouns of address, as well as the use or absence of first names, surnames and titles. English (actually the English and Irish national varieties, for we are focusing on Europe) is used as a point of reference to better understand the changing significance of modes of address in the other three languages.

Each language offers a large variety of linguistic means for the expression of a speaker's personal and social orientation to others through address (Crystal 1993: 7). These means can range from avoidance of direct address to the use of pronouns (such as the French *tu* and *vous*) and verbal forms ('*Viens ici!*' ('Come here!')) using the *tu* form, as opposed to '*Venez ici!*' using the *vous* form, from terms of endearment (*chéri*, *mon amour*) to honorifics[1] and/or titles plus last names (*Madame Depardieu*, *Monsieur le professeur Blanc*) and to combinations of all these. Each language has its own inventory of terms of address. For example, while there is pronominal variation in the address systems of French, German and Swedish, English has little or no pronominal address choice, with the pronoun *you* almost universally the sole address pronoun.

Table 1.1 shows basic similarities between the systems of French, German and Swedish, with all three languages making a distinction between singular and plural on the one hand and less formal and more formal on the other.

If we compare the three languages in the table, we find the following:

1) French and Swedish have two pronouns to mark distinctions in the singular only, whereas German has two pronouns in both the singular and the plural.
2) When addressing someone in French or German, the choice of address pronoun has consequences for the verb form. For example, the sentence 'You gave me a fright' can be rendered in French and German in two ways, with two distinct verb forms: *Tu m'as fait peur / Vous m'avez fait peur*, *Du hast mich*

[1] We use the term 'honorifics' to refer to expressions such as the English *Mr*, *Mrs* and *Ms*, which are combined with a surname, and expressions such as *Sir* and *Madam* used vocatively. The term 'titles' refers to professional titles, such as *Dr* and *Professor*.

Table 1.1 *Address pronoun systems in French, German and Swedish*

	French	German	Swedish
Singular			
less formal (T)	*tu*	*du*	*du*
more formal (V)	*vous*	*Sie*	*du*
			ni
Plural			
less formal (T)	*vous*	*ihr*	*ni*
more formal (V)	*vous*	*Sie*	*ni*

erschreckt / Sie haben mich erschreckt. This even applies in the imperative, where the pronoun is not used, as in French '*Viens ici!*' (T form, named after *tu* in Latin) and '*Venez ici!*' (V form, after *vos* in Latin) ('Come here!') and German '*Komm mal her!*' (T form, singular) and '*Kommt mal her!*' (T form, plural). In Swedish, all verbs have the same ending, regardless of person.

Each of the four languages under investigation has opportunities for combining pronouns with (a) names – first names, last names or both (*Brian*, *Smith*, *Brian Smith*); (b) honorifics and/or titles and names (*Ms Moneypenny*, *Madame Goncourt*, *Herr Müller*, *Frau Doktor Meier*, *Professor Bergkvist*). In addition, in French and German it is possible to combine honorifics and titles (*Monsieur le docteur*, *Frau Professor*). For each of the languages, a distinction was traditionally made between the honorific used to address a married woman (*Mrs*, *Madame*, *Frau*, *Fru*) and that used to address an unmarried woman (*Miss*, *Mademoiselle*, *Fräulein*, *Fröken*). The fact that women's marital status is linguistically encoded in this way has been hotly debated in recent times and has led to gender-inclusive language planning in several languages (e.g. Pauwels 1998). For example, in English the term *Ms* has been created and promoted as the equivalent to the unique honorific *Mr*, which gives no marital information. In German, the married honorific *Frau* has been generalised to address all women. In French, a shift to *Madame* is under way, but *Mademoiselle* is still in use. For Swedish, marital status is not indicated for either men or women since honorifics have largely been abandoned.

The following sections present an overview of address forms in each of the four languages, a brief description of the research sites and an outline of the book structure.

1.2 English

English provides the opportunity to examine how mainly nominal forms can be used to make similar distinctions to those made by the combination of

pronominal and nominal forms in other languages. Address forms in English have been typically used as follows:

(i) Standard English has only one pronoun of address, *you*. This means that, in contrast to a language such as French or German, an English speaker does not have to make a conscious decision before speaking about which pronoun and corresponding verb form to use.
(ii) Given the generic nature of *you* in English, it is relatively straightforward to avoid any direct expression of closeness or distance towards one's interlocutor.
(iii) English has other ways of expressing personal and social orientation to others through address. For example, when English speakers are being very formal, they can use honorifics such as *sir* or *madam*, and when they wish to express informality or intimacy they can use terms of endearment such as *mate* or first names and nicknames.
(iv) The pronoun *thou* is restricted to some British English dialects (Wales 2003: 175–8) or particular religious communities (Birch 1995).
(v) Non-standard plural forms such as *youse* in British English and Irish English varieties are a means of introducing a number distinction that is absent in standard English pronominal address.

Recent developments in British English address practices include an increasingly widespread use of first names in work contexts and service encounters, possibly influenced by patterns in American English, and the spread of terms of endearment such as *mate*. These aspects will be investigated in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.3 French

French offers the opportunity to examine how, in a society in which language has long been monitored and regulated, an area such as address nevertheless reflects changing social values and patterns of interaction. In particular, the choice of French allows fruitful and illuminating comparisons with German with which it shares several address practices.

The typical patterns of address usage in French in vogue in the 1960s could be described as follows:

(i) *Vous* was the default address pronoun and was used in encounters with strangers and with older people.
(ii) *Tu* was generally used within the nuclear family and with close friends and was the pronoun of solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960).
(iii) Children were addressed with *tu*.
(iv) *Tu* was related to left-wing ideals, whereas *vous* had bourgeois connotations: in upper-class families, children might use *vous* to address their parents who might use *vous* to address each other.
(v) There was non-reciprocal use between speakers in a position of higher status and those of lower status – for example, it was common for older speakers to

address younger speakers with *tu* and in return receive *vous*; schoolteachers tended to use *tu* to younger pupils, who responded with *vous*.

(vi) There was a default set of honorifics – *Monsieur*, *Madame*, *Mademoiselle* – used when addressing strangers, which are accompanied by *vous*.

(vii) *Monsieur* and *Madame* could be combined with a professional title, as in *Madame la présidente* or *Monsieur le docteur*.

Many of these patterns still hold today (see Chapters 3 and 4), but the address pronoun system in French has undergone a certain cyclical evolution, in particular since the student and workers' revolts of the late 1960s, when changes in social attitudes and the spread of a utopian egalitarianism were reflected in the younger generation's greater use of informal *tu* than was the case among the older generation (Maley 1974). As the 1970s wore on (Coffen 2002: 235), the movement towards widespread use of *tu* turned out to be a temporary phenomenon and *vous* made a reappearance, due in the main to social hierarchies reasserting themselves. As social relationships have become more informal in France, use of *tu* has again become more widespread (Peeters 2004), in particular among the younger generation. The extent to which younger French speakers are a *tu*-generation is examined in Chapters 3 and 4.

The shift from adolescence and the early 20s to so-called adult life and entry into the workplace is often marked by a shift in the range of social relations that an individual maintains, which can in turn lead to a shift in address pronoun use towards greater use of *vous*. The workplace in France is thus a domain particularly worth exploring in relation to potentially evolving address practices, as will be seen in Chapter 4.

One of the areas where French differs not only from German but also from English and Swedish is in its use of a set of stand-alone honorifics, *Monsieur*, *Madame* and *Mademoiselle* (accompanied by the pronoun *vous*). These continue to be widely used when addressing adult strangers and in service encounters. There is currently some debate in France about the continuing relevance of *Mademoiselle* (see e.g. Crumley 2006, Peyret 2006); arguments against the term mirror those against the use of *Miss* in English (see above), although there is no equivalent replacement term for *Ms* in French. Current use of these terms is explored in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.4 German

German offers a number of unique perspectives to the study of address as well as some which are shared with one or more of the languages studied here but can be explored in a distinctive way for German.

The 'traditional' pattern of address pronoun selection – employed at least until the late 1960s – was as follows (Clyne 1995: 130–1):

(i) *Sie* was the default pronoun of address (i.e. the form normally used in a first encounter with an adult interlocutor); *du* was the pronoun of solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960).
(ii) Members of a family addressed each other as *du*.
(iii) *Du* was used to children under the age of 15.
(iv) Young children tended to call everyone *du*.
(v) *Du* was employed in prayer.
(vi) People might, as a sign of friendship, decide (i.e. make a verbal agreement) to use *du*. Sometimes this was associated with a ritual drink (*Brüderschaft trinken*). The use of *du* was then reciprocal.
(vii) Older people (especially those of higher status) might asymmetrically address younger people, i.e. the older person used *du*, the younger one *Sie*.

As is the case for French, many of these patterns still hold. However, the current study will show how a more progressive system has been developed but is often juggled with the traditional one according to the roles which speakers and their interlocutors choose to take.

German enables us to explore the limits of T and V contexts, and to differentiate between contexts which are clear-cut T or V territory or ambivalent ones in which a great deal of choice is possible. There are people who can be identified as *du* types or *Sie* types according to their use of address in these ambivalent contexts, and in Chapter 3 we will consider whether they can be described in terms of social indices. The existence of a plural T form *ihr* (see Table 1.1) offers a third alternative pronoun enabling German to differentiate between dyadic and multi-party communication and facilitating a focus on the addressee's status as a member of a group. In addition, German enables us to assess how much deviation there is from the link between T and first names and between V and honorific + (title) + last name. Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss some new developments in this regard.

As was the case with French, one of the big turning points in modes of address in German was the student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which used universities as a first base to transform society and free it of its bourgeois characteristics. Egalitarian nominal modes of address (honorific + last name) between staff and students and egalitarian pronominal modes of address (T) between students and, for at least some time, between junior staff and students developed in universities and reciprocal T and first name spread generally among the younger generation. The present-day situation will be analysed in Chapter 4, but more conservative developments can be seen as the result of anti-authoritarian changes often being perceived as imposed, that is, implemented, in an authoritarian way. We will discuss in Chapter 4 how this may extend to other domains, particularly the work domain.

German is a good testing ground for the spread and durability of the student movement's role in address mode changes, especially since it did not affect

eastern Germany. While there was substantial variation in address modes between east and west during the 40-year division of Germany, some of the changes spread to eastern Germany via western Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The perception of and attitudes to modes of address by eastern Germans can be assessed in an ambivalent context of the reception of western capitalist values and nostalgia for the collectivist mentality. Apart from the cultural variation brought about by the division of Germany and its aftermath, the longstanding cultural differences between Germany and Austria are also reflected in modes of address, especially in the workplace, with regard to both pronouns and titles (see Chapter 5).

German modes of address bear witness to the tension between collectivism and more dominant individualism, to globalisation and reactions to it, to the expression of national culture, present and past, in a pluricentric language, a language part-owned by different nations and cultures (see Chapter 5).

1.5 Swedish

Compared with German and French, Swedish offers a very different perspective on the study of address. While the Swedish address system looks very much like the French one – with an informal address pronoun (*du*) and a second-person plural form (*ni*) which can be used as a formal pronoun of address to one person – this is a superficial similarity, as the functions of the two pronouns are very different in Swedish. Swedish contemporary address practices are far more 'radical' than in German or French, and in reality the formal form of address has largely disappeared, leaving *du* as the default in almost all situations and to almost all interlocutors. This means that the Swedish address system is fast becoming similar in that respect to the English system. However, the current situation in Swedish is a relatively recent development and, in fact, the Swedish address system has undergone by far the most significant changes of the four languages in modern times. It is a compelling case of how a system can change from being characterised by a high degree of formality to extreme informality.

The traditional pattern of address usage in Swedish until the middle of the last century, when the system started to break down, was characterised by the following:

(i) *Du* was the pronoun of solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960) and restricted in use to the family and other intimate relations. As a marker of solidarity, it was also used in the labour movement to emphasise equality and among friends, often after a ritual agreement to be on *du* terms, sometimes accompanied by a drink (*du-skål*, '*du*-toast'). Adopting *du* address was thus governed by several rules and it was the privilege of the older person or the woman to suggest it.

(ii) The pronoun *ni* had attracted negative connotations for many speakers as a result of having been used socially downwards, addressing a person who lacked a title, who in turn would have to give the title back to his/her interlocutor (Ahlgren 1978).

(iii) The lack of a neutral formal pronoun for addressing a stranger gave rise to a great deal of insecurity surrounding address use, leading to avoidance strategies such as the use of the third person, including the person's title if known, passives and other ways of avoiding direct address pronouns. Examples of such paraphrases are '*Önskas kaffe?*' ('Is coffee desired?'), '*Är det till att vara nöjd?*' (lit. 'Is it to be satisfied?', meaning 'Are you satisfied?') and '*Kan professorn komma i morgon?*' (lit. 'Can the professor come tomorrow?') addressing the professor directly in this way.

(iv) In the family it was not unusual for children to address their parents in the third person, e.g. '*Vill mamma ha kaffe?*' ('Does mum want coffee?'), avoiding the use of address pronouns.

(v) Similarly, children were expected to address older people in the third person, e.g. '*Vill tant Anna/farbror Sven ha kaffe?*' using the addressee's first name in combination with *tant* ('auntie') and *farbror* ('uncle'), no matter whether they were relatives or not. Teachers were addressed by *Fröken* (Miss) or *Magistern* (the equivalent of *Sir* in English).

The strong egalitarian movement in Sweden also worked as a catalyst for the introduction of *du* as a universal form of address. A contributing factor in the swift implementation of universal *du* was the cumbersome address system described above, in which Swedish lacked a polite pronoun to use with strangers.

The study will show that to older Swedes *ni* often has a negative connotation, a connotation that the younger informants are largely unaware of. Such differences between members of a speech community can potentially lead to misunderstandings. In Chapter 3 the social factors which govern the possible use of *ni* will be explored in more detail.

Workplaces, schools and universities (Chapter 4) are clear *du*-domains in Sweden today, which is a striking change from the situation around the middle of the last century. While *du* has become the default form of address, applicable in almost all situations, it has largely lost its role as a marker of solidarity or intimacy. Subsequently, other means must be employed to express such values and Swedish thus enables us to study what happens when the T–V distinction is eradicated (by the adoption of universal T) and how other means of expressing personal and social orientation to others through address come into play.

While Swedish is clearly different from both French and German, there are also very clear-cut differences between the two national varieties of Swedish – Finland-Swedish and Sweden-Swedish, to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In general the former has been described as more formal and more prone

to V use than Sweden-Swedish, which has moved further along towards informal patterns of address. The national differences are addressed in some detail in Chapter 5 and allow us to also attribute some current variation to partly different past experiences in each country.

Few situations today call for the use of any other form of address than *du*, but as will become clear throughout the study, the situation is far from straightforward. Conflicting rules of language use are still in operation and the Swedish data in general clearly illustrate a great deal of variation, which further underlines the fact that the system is unstable. The controversial re-entry of *ni* into service encounters by young sales persons addressing the (very) old (see Chapter 4) is one case in point and one which has attracted much attention in the press since it was first observed more than two decades ago (Mårtensson 1986). Swedish thus enables us to address the question of cyclical movement in address, i.e. where a previously nearly extinct form re-enters the system but with new functions.

1.6 The research sites

The methodology used in this study combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques: focus groups, network interviews consisting of a questionnaire and an interview, participant observation and chat groups (see section 2.4 for details). We wanted to include national variation in our study, and we thus examine national varieties of German, Swedish and English. These three languages can be regarded as pluricentric languages, that is, ones with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own norms (Clyne 1992: 1). We initially decided to include seven research sites: Paris, Toulouse (in the south of France), Mannheim (for western Germany), Leipzig (for eastern Germany, the former GDR), Vienna (Austria), Gothenburg (Sweden) and Vaasa (a town in one of the bilingual Swedish-Finnish-speaking parts of Finland). However, due to difficulties in recruiting and retaining research assistants, data for Toulouse comprise one focus group only, which will be referred to occasionally in the following chapters. For the purposes of comparison with English, one focus group each was held in London, Newcastle upon Tyne (in the north-east of England) and Tralee (in the south-west of Ireland, in a bilingual Irish–English area).

1.6.1 Paris

Paris was chosen as the main French language site, as it is the capital of France and a major urban and economic centre. All the 'Paris' participants in our study live and work in the Île-de-France region, which is made up of the city of Paris and the so-called 'inner ring' and 'outer ring' of *départements*. The total population of the Île-de-France region is 11,399,300, with a little over 2 million living in

the city of Paris (2005 figures). Paris and its surrounding area exert a huge power of attraction on people both from other French regions and from other countries. One in every two Parisians – that is, inhabitants of the city of Paris – is in fact born outside the Île-de-France region, with nearly a third from other French regions and just under a quarter from other countries (based on 1999 INSEE figures, reported in *L'Express* 2006).

1.6.2 Toulouse

The choice of Toulouse was motivated by its position in the south-west of France in the border regions of the French state and in theory far from the influence of Parisian norms, a location therefore where distinct norms of address usage might be in operation. The inhabitants of the city and metropolitan area number 1,117,000,[2] which makes it the fifth largest city in France. Toulouse has the second largest student population after Paris and its university is one of the oldest in Europe. The city is the unofficial home of Occitan culture: the Occitan equivalent of the *Académie française* is situated there, as well as Radio Occitania, which promotes the language and culture. However, in the city proper, apart from a small number of street signs in Occitan, the language is almost never heard.

1.6.3 Mannheim

Mannheim was chosen because of its central location, just south of the centre of the old Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). Situated at the junction of the Rhine and Neckar rivers in the state of Baden-Württemberg, it has a population of 390,000, but there are 1.7 million people living within a 25 km radius of Mannheim. It is not only an educational centre in its own right: Heidelberg, with its prestigious and historic university, is a mere tram ride away.

1.6.4 Leipzig

Leipzig was chosen because it is the largest city in eastern Germany other than Berlin (which had been divided). Leipzig has over 500,000 inhabitants and is in the state (*Bundesland*) of Saxony. It is both a trade centre with its annual trade fair and a traditional educational centre with a university and an annual book fair. The international contacts through the trade fairs and the relatively large percentage of international students kept Leipzig linked to the world, and the tradition of an educated and liberal middle class proved so strong in Leipzig that the city became one of the epicentres of the civil disobedience movement that ended communist domination of eastern Europe. In post-unification Germany, Leipzig has become one of the few economically strong regions in eastern Germany.

[2] These and subsequent statistics are from 2007.