

A NOTE ON THE TYPES OF ADDRESS SHIFTS¹

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This paper will deal with a kind of linguistic behaviour which belongs to the broader set of sociolinguistic studies on address systems, and will be termed here as *address shift*. The aim of this paper is to attempt to formulate some typological categories for the description of this phenomenon. A number of authors have given accounts of address shifting in various address systems. I will first look at their findings.

In an article on the 19th century Russian pronominal usage, Friedrich (1966) analyses three main patterns of address in dyadic pairs: the symmetrical *vy*, the symmetrical *ty*, and the asymmetrical relationship of *ty* and *vy*. The author gives ten discriminations underlying pronominal usage: the topic of discourse, the context of the speech event, age, generation, sex, kinship status, dialect, group membership, relative jural and political authority, and emotional solidarity — the sympathy and antipathy between two speakers (cf. Friedrich 1966: 229—31).

A number of examples in Friedrich's data² shows that the above patterns may be replaced by each other. This leads him to the formulation of a statement which is crucial to the understanding of address shift:

In addition to historical and evolutionary change, any synchronic system [i.e., address system — A. J.] shows alternation, variation and kinds of option which can lead to additional inferences about functional and hierarchical relations. For example, the numerous cases of dramatic, rapid and often erratic switching and 'pronominal breakthrough' often suggest the hierarchical relations between the discriminations. In other words, just as 'regular usage' symbolized a sufficient and necessary co-occurrence

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² Friedrich's data are derived from Russian literary works whose action takes place in the 19th century.

of discriminations, so the many cases of switching symbolized some realignment, or change in relative power, or simply the addition or subtraction of a component (Friedrich 1966: 239).

Then, Friedrich goes on to discuss eight examples of switching and breakthrough. My primary interest here will be directed to two additional kinds of switching recognized by Friedrich, namely, the "expressive" and "latent" *ty*. The shift to the expressive *ty* is a violation of the rule requiring *vy* in a given situation. "Some mood, whim or mental state could make the speaker play or altogether ignore the usual rules, depending of course, on his emotional makeup and special sensitivity" (Friedrich 1966: 248). In the examples given by Friedrich, shifts to the expressive *ty* were triggered by fear, surprise, despair, by commitment to an extreme (revolutionary) ideology, etc. Similar factors accounted, too, for a case in which one speaker used *ty* for the interlocutor in her thoughts but said *vy*.

Brown and Ford (1964) describe in their article the address system of American English.³ They base their study on five main English forms of address: title (T), title and last name (TLN), last name (LN), first name (FN), multiple name (MN). Their presentation of the ways in which the above forms are most commonly used is followed by a specification of a model for the progression of address in time. The graphic model reproduced here serves as an illustration of the possible address shifts found by the authors:

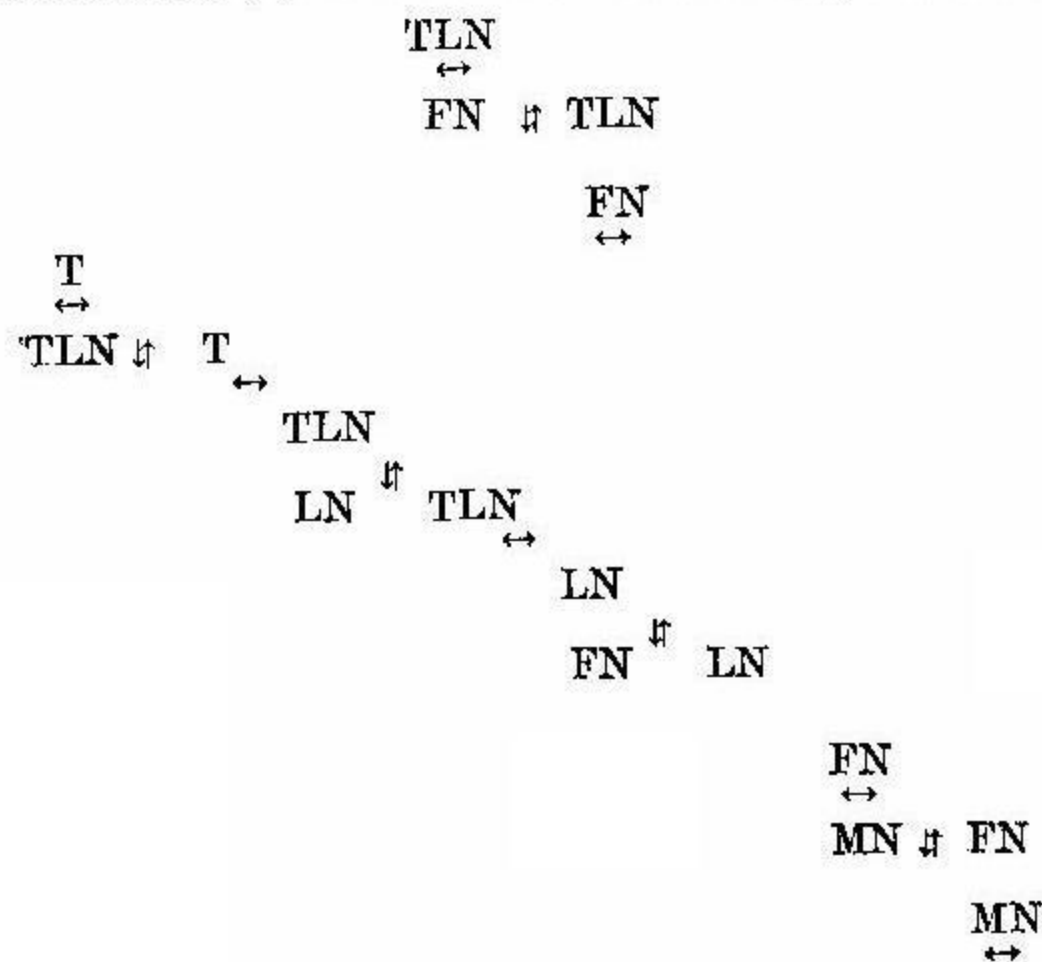


Fig. 1. Graphic models of the progression of address in time (from left to right). The upper portion of the figure represents the major progression; the lower portion represents the full progression⁴ (Brown and Ford 1964: 241).

In an explanatory note, Brown and Ford add that

Dyads may begin at any point, need not move at all, and if they move may skip steps [... A. J.] Any less formal term may be used downwards in a nonreciprocal pattern with any formal term being used upwards (1964: 241-242).

McIntosh (1966) examines and interprets the use of two second person pronouns *thou* and *you*, in the speech of Celia and Rosalind in Shakespeare's "As you like it". The result is a "dynamic" picture of the usage of the two pronouns within one dyad with the author's aim being "to restore as nearly as possible the old awareness of the effects conveyed by the selection of one as against the other form" (McIntosh 1966: 71). Most of the pronominal shifts recorded by McIntosh are explained in terms of changes in the emotional attitudes of the two cousins towards each other.

These three articles enable us to formulate some further theoretical assumptions on the nature and kinds of address shifts.

The following part of this paper is based on examples of address shifts reported by several Polish and British informants in the course of interviews consisting of approximately 40 questions (questions on address shifts between kin interlocutors were not included in the interviews).

Now, let us assume that address shift is a *transitional moment* between the speaker's use of one form of address after another (towards the same addressee). Both uses are exemplifications of the address system common to the speaker and the addressee. If we, then, think of the address system as a combination of at least two factors⁵ relevant in describing (and possibly predicting) the occurrence of a particular form of address and take for granted that the conditions of a dyad's life are not always the same, we find an explanation for the change (i.e., address shift). If one (or more) of the components characterizing the relationship of two speakers as well as one or more features of the communicative act they are involved in is altered, a change in the use of a form of address may result; with just one speaker, or with both.

Examples (1)-(4) illustrate the influence of some of the factors involved in the alternation of patterns of address between two persons. The examples are direct quotations from an interview with a British informant, a university teacher.

³ The sources of data utilized by Brown and Ford were the following: usage in modern American plays, actual usage in a Bostonian business firm, reported usage of business executives, recorded usage of children in the Midwest.

⁴ In spite of the general statement of the authors that the changes of address forms (address shifts) proceed from "left to right", cases of the reverse movement also occur.

⁵ Brown and Gilman's (1960) study of pronouns of address in a number of Indo-European languages is based on two dimensions underlying usage of the pronouns, i.e., *power* and *solidarity*. Other authors such as Ervin-Tripp (1971) and Friedrich (1966) list more categories underlying the address systems that they deal with.

(1) setting

"At the party I'd call a professor whom I normally call *professor LN* by his FN".

(2) audience

"Children from upper-class boarding schools may possibly shift from LN to FN in front of the members of their families. You might call someone 'Jenkins' at school but if you are standing in front of Jenkins' mother you would not say 'Jenkins'. You would say 'John'".

(3) intimacy (solidarity)

"I think you have to be quite close with the person to call him by his LN. If a superior called an inferior by the LN instead of *Mr LN*, I think someone would walk out".

(4) channel of communication/formality

"There is a man in the British Council in Warsaw I call 'Dick' when I see him but if I wrote a business letter asking for a job at the British Council, I would put 'Dear Mr. Richard Smith' in the heading".

At the present moment it is not possible to give an exhaustive and reliable set of examples of address shifts occurring in English and Polish that will illustrate all possible factors which may promote the shift. However, interviews with informants and some unsystematic observations suggest that changes in the mutual relationship between any two speakers (i.e., reweighting of their relative statuses), changes of the setting of the communicative act, its topic, function, channel and the like may, and in a lot of cases do entail address shift.

Let us now turn to the primary objective of this paper, the systematization of types of address shifts. The data seem to suggest that there are four categories with respect to which every instance of address shift may be described:

1. formality
2. reciprocity
3. markedness
4. time

FORMALITY

As has been noted before, address shift reflects some change in the relationship between the speakers. If there is a change in the degree of formality between the interlocutors and the newly used forms of address are less, or more, formal than before, the shift is *vertical*. If the address shift does not reflect any change in the formality level, it is *horizontal*.

Shifts from TLN to FN are the most typical vertical shifts in English⁶. They

⁶ Also in Polish shifts of the same type are the most frequent. However, it must be made clear that Polish forms of address equivalent to the TLN form in English have, in most cases, different realizations, e.g., *panie doktorze*, *panie profesorze*, *proszę pana*,

usually are connected with the increase of solidarity (cf. Brown and Gilman 1960) between the speakers or equalization of their statuses. However rare they may be, vertical shifts which advance in the opposite direction, i.e., from FN to TLN are also found.

In the case of horizontal shifts an alternate form of address may be used as a "substitute" for the regular form. A good example here is provided by *vocatives*.⁷ One may address his interlocutor with FN interchangeably with some vocatives without any changes in the degree of formality in speech.

RECIPROCITY

Address shift may be characterized by a change in linguistic behaviour of both or only one speaker within a dyad. If both speakers change their forms of address, the shift is *reciprocal*. For example, two speakers may exchange mutually TLN. If one of them decides that they are "solidary" enough to exchange mutual FNs, he is very likely to initiate a reciprocal shift towards the new, more familiar form.⁸

The situation may also be such that two speakers start their relationship with a pattern of address showing the nonreciprocal exchange of, say, TLN and FN. It is possible that after some time of their acquaintance one (most probably the one who gives FN to the other) may suggest the reciprocal usage of FN. In such a case the shift will be *nonreciprocal*.

proszę pani, etc. The very form TLN in Polish is not so widely used as in English. Furthermore, the shift to FN is, in Polish, connected with a simultaneous shift to *ty*, an informal pronoun of address, which in everyday standard Polish has no equivalent formal pronoun. (The formal pronoun *wy* has very restricted usage in modern Polish). In sum, the most frequent vertical address shifts in Polish can be presented schematically in the following way:

$$\text{PAN(I)} \rightarrow \begin{cases} \text{FN} \\ \text{ty} \end{cases}$$

where PAN(I) is a symbol used to denote all forms of address used in Polish as equivalents to the English TLN.

⁷ I use the term following Zwicky (1974).

⁸ It should be noted that in English, Polish and many other languages it is not always the case that either party of the dyad may initiate the shift towards less formal forms of address. This right is enjoyed by the person who is "better power based". "The suggestion that solidarity be recognized comes more gracefully from the elder than from the younger, from the richer than from the poorer, from the employer than from the employee, from the nobler than from the commoner, from the female than from the male" (Brown and Gilman 1960: 261).

Also, not everyone to whom the shift has been offered will accept it at once. For example, it has been reported about Polish that a young person may refuse to address informally a much older person in spite of being asked to do so several times.

MARKEDNESS

This category corresponds to Friedrich's type of "expressive" and "latent" *ty*. On some occasions speakers may ignore the rules governing the use of address forms. This can be done quite subconsciously by the speaker, e.g., in the case of ignorance of the addressee's title, name or status. It may happen in English that a married woman, of whom the speaker does not know that she is married, can be addressed *Miss LN*. If the woman wanted the other person to know about her marital status she might say: "It's *Mrs.* actually", which would then trigger a shift from *Miss LN* to *Mrs LN*. There are other instances of shifting to socially "inappropriate" forms of address when the speaker wants to achieve certain ends by employing such forms. The most typical example is that of joking. Polish students often call each other by the form *panie LN* or *pani LN* although normally one would expect to hear FNs or nick-names. It is said that a purpose of that is to ridicule (maybe also subconsciously) this form, which is used by university teachers to students, in contrast with the form FN (or LN alone) used by teachers in secondary schools.⁹

Other examples of address shifts of this kind may be found in instances of insults, slights, great affection, flattering, etc. I will term such shifts *marked*.

Shifts which are, by opposition, *unmarked* do not need any detailed explanation as these are all shifts which are performed by the speakers in accordance with the rules of address systems.

TIME

An important aspect of address shift is how long the new pattern of address is retained. A division here will be made between *temporary* and *permanent* shifts.

All temporary shifts are characterized by later resumption of the pattern of address used between the interlocutors previously (the forms of address which are regular for the two persons). The formula for temporary shifts is as follows: $X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X$; where 'X' is the pattern of address before the shift and 'Y' the pattern after the (temporary) shift.

It is characteristic all of marked shifts that they are temporary. This becomes obvious when we consider that no one person speaks in a marked way all the time.

It is also more common for horizontal shifts to be temporary rather than

⁹ It is important to remember that the "playful" forms of address are used between students when the conversation is not serious, i.e., the register and the topic allow for it. Thus, the form *panie/pani LN* used in such a context would be one of the linguistic means employed by the speaker to emphasize function of his talk (e.g., a summons before telling a joke vs. a summons before an explanation of some problem before an examination, when FN is more likely to occur).

permanent. When the speaker has available a range of possible forms to address one person with, and these forms show no difference on the formality level, he alters the forms of address, often with great flexibility and inventiveness.

Temporary vertical shifts may occur between interlocutors of unequal status or interlocutors between whom the increase of solidarity does not extend for the time following the address shift (from formal to informal).

Cases of the first type (interlocutors with unequal status) can often occur in the teacher — student relationship. If the teacher and the student are friends and they maintain informal relations exchanging reciprocal FNs, it is very probable that, during a class, among other students who reciprocate with the teacher TLNs, the two will shift to more formal terms of address (or possibly to avoidance forms (\emptyset)). After the class they will shift back to FNs, as the lack of formality and the absence of other students no longer require formality in address. According to informants, situations of this kind are likely to happen in English and in Polish.

The other situation mentioned earlier, when solidarity does not persist even when the shift from TLN to FN has occurred can be shown in Polish by special occasion of shifting from reciprocal *proszę pana(i)* to *ty* (FN), called *Bruderschaft*. In such a situation, if the contact of the two persons is in some way incidental, meeting later in a neutral setting, e.g., in the street or on a bus, they will often maintain reciprocal *proszę pana(i)* as if shift to FN had never taken place.

Permanent shifts, are as has been implied, always unmarked. They can be either vertical or horizontal. Permanent horizontal shifts are not very frequent. However, a new nick-name may be invented for a person in a dyad exchanging MNs, and become the regular and permanent form of address.

When a permanent shift takes place and a new pattern of address is established it may later become a subject of a still further change. The progression would take the following form: $X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z(\rightarrow Y)$; where 'X' is the original pattern of address within a dyad, 'Y' is the pattern after the first shift (permanent) and 'Z' is the pattern after the second shift (permanent or temporal in which case 'Y' will be resumed later on).

In conclusion, the importance of address shift in the study of address systems should be stressed. Although my descriptive powers are too limited to discuss all the types of address shifts in a greater detail, the four categories of reciprocity of address shift; involvement of formality in address shift; markedness of address shift and the time for which the new pattern of address is used seem to provide adequate dimensions for the classification of particular instances of address shifts.

Finally, I want to indicate one methodological problem concerning any study of address shift, namely, the problem of data - collection. It seems that it is impossible to carry out any systematic observation of the phenomenon in

question because of its relative rarity of occurrence and the long stretches of time involved. Modern literary works do not abound in instances of address shifts either. Eventually, we are left with specially designed questionnaires¹⁰ which are not always very reliable but have to suffice at the present time.

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¹⁰ An interesting example is a questionnaire on forms of address designed at the University of Kiel and used by Danso, Goodby and Kohz (1979) in their study of the address system in Twi. The questionnaire covers a very wide range of address forms and situations in which they are used but apart from some attempts to find some dynamic patterns the questionnaire does not give much evidence for possible address shifts. For example, the questionnaire does not deal with any "extraordinary" forms of address, and therefore cannot reveal anything about marked address shifts.