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From community to conversation – and back

Exploring the interpersonal potentials of two generic pronouns in Danish

by

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Abstract

This paper combines a quantitative study of the two most important Danish pronouns used for generic reference, du and man, with interaction analyses. The quantitative study shows an overall increase in the use of generic du at the expense of man. However, a large scale quantitative study alone cannot tell us much about the finer differences between the two variants, let alone come up with explanations for the change in their use. In this paper, we demonstrate a way to supplement a quantitative study with detailed interaction analyses with the aim of interpreting the tendencies demonstrated in the quantitative study. Whereas there is no difference between generic du and man with respect to propositional meaning, our interactional analyses reveal important differences in their interpersonal potentials: Generic du is to a larger degree than man used as a resource for enactment and involvement. This difference between du and man is due to du retaining some of its second person meaning also when used generically, and the rise in the use of generic du is likely to reflect an ongoing process of intimization in the society at large.

1. Introduction

In Danish, as well as in a lot of other languages, second person pronouns may not only be used with specific reference to the addressee but also in contexts where they are used to refer to an undefined person or group of persons in general, that is with generic reference. The second person singular pronoun *du* may thus in contemporary (spoken) Danish be used even in generalizing over experiences which do not include the addressee:

Excerpt 1

<i>og</i>	<i>dengang</i>	<i>skulle man</i>	<i>ikke</i>	<i>nødvendigvis</i>	<i>have</i>
and	at-that-time	need one	not	necessarily	have

studentereksamen *for* *at komme* *indpå seminariet*
 high school-certificate in-order to come in at teacher's college
du *kunne faktisk komme ind med med # der fra*
you could actually come in with with there from
*tredje real*¹
 third real
 'and at that time you didn't need a high school certificate in order to enter
 teacher's college **you** could actually be admitted from lower secondary
 school'

In excerpt 1 the addressee is not included in the reference of the pronoun *du* as the speaker is actually generalizing over experiences which the addressee must be expected not to share. The reason being that the speaker is considerably older than the addressee, and the educational system has been changed since the time he was a student (the so-called *realskole* did not exist any more at the time the interviewer went to school).

It is worth noticing that in excerpt 1 above the speaker is changing between *man* (the traditional generic pronoun in standard Danish) and *du* even when speaking about what seems to be the same referent. As we shall see in this article, this often happens in contexts where *du* is used with generic reference. This alone indicates that the semantics of the two pronouns when used generically are very similar, and the difference between the two pronouns seems very subtle indeed and very hard if not impossible to pinpoint via native speaker intuitions alone. The analysis of the LANCHART corpus has shown that they have the same referential potential in their generic use, and within this envelope of variation they can therefore be seen as "semantically equivalent" in the sense implied by the Labovian tradition, i.e. "truth-conditionally equivalent and used on the whole to refer to the same state of affairs" (Weiner and Labov 1983) (cf. Torben Juel Jensen's article in this volume).

This does not mean, however, that we find *du* and *man* semantically equivalent in all respects. On the contrary, we find it indeed very likely that the non-propositional semantics of generic *du* and *man* are somewhat different. Prior analyses on the generic usage of second person pronouns by Bolinger, Kitagawa & Lehrer and Berman has suggested a general difference between second and third person pronouns when used generically (see Bolinger 1979, Kitagawa and Lehrer 1990; Berman 2004). These analyses can be paraphrased as follows: The generically used pronoun retains some of its second person meaning also when used generically, not in a truth conditional sense but with respect to viewpoint. By using the pronoun the addressee is invited to see the phenomena in question from the inside, so to speak, that is from the viewpoint of the generalized person.

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all the examples in this article are original excerpts from the LANCHART corpus.

The use of *du* with generic reference has caused a great deal of public debate in Denmark over the last decades. The general opinion among the debaters seems to be that this use of the second person pronoun is new in Danish or that it has at least increased substantially since the 1970's, and it is often assumed that the increased use is a result of influence from English, where *you* has been used for generic reference for centuries. The results of the quantitative study of the LANCHART corpus which are described in detail in Jensen's article in this volume but will be summarized in the next section have confirmed that there has been a rise in the use of generic *du* at least in some parts of the Danish speech community during the last decades.

Quantitative analysis of the LANCHART corpus shows a considerable intraspeaker variation with respect to the use of generic pronouns during the individual conversations. This variation seems to indicate that the choice between the two variants of pronouns with generic reference is dependent on the way the interaction between the interlocutors develops during the conversation in a very local way. As an example, Figure 1 below shows the distribution of the tokens of *du* and *man* over time in a sociolinguistic interview from 2006 with a man from Copenhagen. The X-axis shows elapsed time in seconds, and the occurrences of *du* and *man* with generic reference are plotted in two separate lines above. Only the tokens uttered by the informant are plotted in the diagram. In the conversation, which is 164 minutes long, there are 56 occurrences of generic *du* (marked by ▲ in the diagram) and 178 occurrences of generic *man* (marked by ◆):

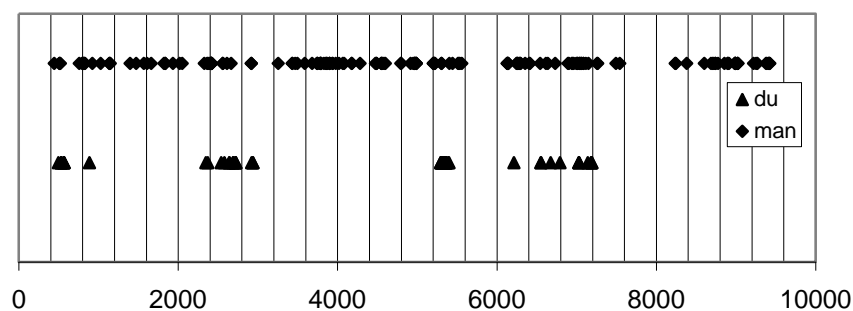


Figure 1: Distribution of generic pronouns in a single conversation

As can be seen, the distribution of especially *du* is highly heterogeneous. In fact, it is possible to identify 6 passages comprising altogether only 5 % (454 out of

9847 seconds) of the interview as measured in time, but including 82 % (47 out of 56) of all occurrences of generic *du*.

This uneven distribution (clustering) of generic *du*, together with the observation mentioned above that *du* and *man* are often used interchangeably even within very short stretches of conversation (alternations), make it obvious to explore the difference between *man* and *du* through interaction analyses. Alternations between the two pronouns and realizations of clusters of the two pronouns are here points of interest:

Alternations are likely to be interactionally prompted; that is, motivated by the actors in order for them to perform a task at hand. A substantial amount of research on phenomena such as *restarts*, *corrections* and so-called *repairs* (e.g. Goodwin 1980; Jefferson 1983; Schegloff, Sacks & Jefferson 1977; Schegloff 1987, 1992) or *code-switching* and *crossing* (Auer 1998; Gumperz 1982; Jørgensen 2004; Rampton 1995) certainly shows that these occur during interactionally prompted and thereby noticeable moments in talk-in-interaction. The very alternation from one generic pronoun to another may therefore reveal some aspects as to what kind of tasks they are used to perform.

Realizations of clusters of a particular variant of a linguistic variable have in other studies proved to be an illuminating object of investigation (Podesva 2008). Conversationalists' choice of one word over another tends to be motivated by a variety of different interactional factors, for instance the very way the words sound compared to the neighbouring words, that is, use of assonance and alliteration (Jefferson 1996) or their institutional appropriateness (Drew & Heritage 1992, 29-32); the realization of a cluster of the same words is, therefore, even more likely to be attuned to ongoing activities.

2. The LANCHART study of the spreading of generic *du*

In the LANCHART study, developments in the use of generic *du* in the Danish speech community are analyzed with "the sociolinguistic variable" as a tool. By looking at the generic *du* as a generic pronoun it becomes part of a paradigm of pronouns which can be used with generic reference, and variation and change in the use of generic *du* can therefore be quantified by comparing ratios of *du* in relation to the other pronouns with generic reference.

Characteristic of generic pronouns is that their referents are human and generalized: the descriptive reference may include the speaker, the addressee or some specific third party, but it always goes beyond that in an unspecified way (though the context of use often delimits the extension to some degree). The pronoun refers to a generalized person, and what is predicated about this referent is asserted to hold for every instantiation of the type. The variable "pronoun with generic reference" therefore includes pronouns in contexts where they are used to refer to an undefined person or group of persons in general. That is, a pronoun which refers not only to the speaker, the addressee or some specific third party,

but to a generalized person (cf. Jensen, this volume, for a more elaborate discussion of the variable).

In modern Danish, a handful of pronouns may be used with generic reference, but except from in traditional dialects only the pronouns *man* – historically derived from the noun *mand* (≈ English *man*) - and second person singular *du* occur with any significant frequency.

Man is undoubtedly the most frequent and most generally used pronoun for generic reference in modern Danish.² It has been used as a generic pronoun since the Middle Ages, and it is the only pronoun which has generic reference as its main usage. Examples of *man* with generic reference are given in excerpt 2 and 3. In excerpt 2, the referent of *man* is everybody capable of taking a bus (in Denmark); in excerpt 3 the reference is more restricted as the sentence refers to the conditions concerning a particular place and time, but it is still generic as the whole point of the predication is to illustrate the general conditions, not the properties of specific persons.

Excerpt 2

man *behøver* *bare* *at* *tage* *bussen* *for* *at* *høre* *at* *de* *unge*
one needs only to take the-bus for to hear that the young
taler *utrolig* *dårligt*
 talk incredibly bad
 ‘**you** only need to take the bus to hear that the young people talk incredibly bad’

Excerpt 3

man *kunne* *ikke* *komme* *indi* *ungdomsklubben* *om* *aftenen*
one could not come in in the-youth-club in the-evening
medmindre *man* *blev* *kørt* *og* *bragt*
 unless **one** was driven and brought
 ‘**you** couldn’t get to the youth club in the evening unless **you** were brought there by car’

As already mentioned, also the second person singular pronoun *du* can be used with generic reference:

Excerpt 4

hvis *man* *ikke* *bruger* *kondomet* *rigtigt* *så* *kan* *du* *få*
 if one not use the-condom correctly then can you get

² The pronoun *man* does have one important limitation, though: It can only be used in contexts where it functions as syntactic subject. In other functions, e.g. as object, in a prepositional phrase or as the possessive in a noun phrase it is supplemented by the pronoun *en*. The pronoun *man* is thus indeclinable (cf. Jensen, this volume).

børn af det men du kan også få aids af det ikke
 children of it but **you** can also get aids of it not
 ‘if you don’t use the condom correctly **you** can get children but **you** can also
 get aids, right’

The second person pronoun in excerpt 4 above does not refer specifically to the addressee but to a generalized person, as it is not specific situations which are described but facts about how the world is structured, according to the speaker. This can be seen both from the fact that the referent of the *du* who gets children and aids must be the same as the referent of the *man* who does not use the condom correctly (and it would be very unusual if *man* was used for referring to the specific addressee), but also when including the context of the excerpt from which it is obvious that the interlocutors are not talking about the specific addressee but general issues concerning aids and hiv.

In addition to the nominative form *du* the pronoun also occurs in the accusative/oblique form *dig* and in the possessive forms *din* (singular, common gender), *dit* (singular neuter) and *dine* (plural). In the following *du* will always refer to the lexeme in all its forms.

Even though generic *du* may not be as old as generic *man*, it is not a new variant in Danish if we by “new” mean that it has come into existence within the last 30-40 years (cf. Jensen, this volume). But the use of it seems to have spread since the 1970’s.

The results of the large scale study of generic pronouns in the LANCHART corpus confirm the assumption that there has been a rise in the use of generic *du* in Danish in the last decades. Furthermore, the results indicate that the increased use of *du* has spread from Copenhagen to the rest of the country: At the time of the old recordings in the 1970’ies and 1980’ies the speakers from Copenhagen were clearly the spearheads as regards the use of generic *du*, while speakers from Jutland (i.e. the locations furthest away from Copenhagen) used it the least. What seems to have happened during the decades from the old to the new recordings in 2005-07 is that generic *du* has spread across the speech community at the same time as the use of *du* in the Copenhagen speech community seen as a whole has been stabilizing or even declining. In other words: Generic *du* has at some time between the old and the new recordings stopped spreading from Copenhagen and has become more or less evenly distributed across the country. This is even more evident when including the younger speakers (i.e. speakers born after 1963) as they have a lower use of generic *du* than the informants from the oldest age cohort (born between 1942 and 1963). This indicates that the use of generic *du* is no longer increasing in the speech community seen as a whole – though it is not possible from the results to determine whether the use of *du* has peaked yet within the group of speakers

born 1942-63, and among younger speakers outside Copenhagen. However, the use of generic *du* definitely seems to peak with the oldest age cohort which was at the time of the new recordings 45-65 years old.

The results indicate that the spearheads in the increased use of generic *du* were speakers from Copenhagen born within the period 1942-63 (generation 1). As the focus of this article is to come up with possible explanations for the rise in the use of generic *du*, it was therefore an obvious choice to study the use of generic pronouns within this group of speakers. We therefore chose conversations with this group of speakers from the LANCHART corpus for the qualitative study which will be described in the following. There are 24 informants from generation 1 in Copenhagen comprised of 6 persons from each of the four cells defined by the working class and the middle class and males and females (cf. Gregersen's introduction to this volume). As the aim of the qualitative analysis was to elucidate the quantitative patterns found in the large scale study the speakers were selected as to maximize representativeness. We therefore chose one speaker from each cell (i.e. one working class woman, one working class man, one middle class woman and one middle class man). Within each cell we chose the speaker who with respect to the proportions of generic *du* in relation to other pronouns with generic reference and the development from the old to the new recordings was closest to the mean of the cell as a whole.

These four informants were all recorded during sociolinguistic interviews twice, the first time in 1987-89 and the second time in 2005-06. In these 8 conversations all occurrences of generic *du* and *man* were initially marked; afterwards passages were selected for analyses based on the distribution of *du* and *man* as described below.

3. Interaction analysis of generic *du* and *man*

In the following we shall turn our attention to the use of the pronouns in social interaction; in other words, we redirect our focus from community to conversation. The analysis is set up to address the following question: are generic *du* and *man* used differently in conversation? And if so, does this difference when combined with theories of changes in social actors' interactional conduct help to explain the rise in the use of generic *du*. The study presented in the following is informed by approaches such as *conversation analysis* and *systemic functional linguistics*.

The study shows that there are indeed differences in the ways generic *du* and *man* are used. Such differences are here referred to as tendencies. We speak of "tendencies" rather than, say, "rules" or "constraints" since we find cases which contradict the pattern made up by the tendencies. Nevertheless, there are tendencies, and these tendencies are, in our opinion, likely to reflect differences

in the pragmatics of generic *du* and *man* connected with a subtle semantic difference.

Whereas the previous study was quantitative, the study presented in the following is predominately qualitative. Qualitative work is by far the most common approach to the study of talk-in-interaction, especially within conversation analysis. However, in this respect our study differs from the most common conversation analytic approach since we supplement our qualitative analysis with an awareness of the frequency of the given phenomena in our data. As mentioned above, the focus of our study has been contexts in which alternations between *du* and *man*, or vice versa, or clusters of *du* or *man* occur in relatively bounded stretches of talk. Our data consist of sociolinguistic interviews which, roughly speaking, evolve around questions and answers (see e.g. Schiffrin 1994, 160-180). We have, therefore, defined such bounded stretches of talk as *question-answer-sequences* (i.e. a question followed by an answer) or as elaborations of a question-answer-sequences with various types of expansions (Schegloff 2007).

Another way in which our analyses differs from a typical conversation analytic approach concerns the analyses of how conversational contributions are received by fellow interlocutors, the so called “proof procedure for the analysis of turns” (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974, 728). Within the framework of conversation analysis, every conversational contribution, verbalized as well as non-verbal, is considered to display the actor’s interpretation of a prior contribution. For the participants in a conversation, this condition provides opportunities always to check whether one has been understood accordingly or not by fellow interlocutors (see e.g. Schegloff 1992); for the analyst, it provides a proof procedure which enables the him or her to check whether a given turn is interpreted in the same way as the participants seem to interpret it (Schegloff 1993, 101).

However, since our focus of interest are the two easily unnoticed generic pronouns *du* and *man*, we have found it problematic to base our analyses mostly, let alone solely, on participants’ reactions upon their use. Naturally, participants respond to the turns (and, thereby, certain social actions) within which the generic pronouns are embedded. But it is very difficult, bordering on impossible, to point to responses oriented specifically towards the pronouns themselves.

4. Alternations between *du* and *man*

In our data set, we found and analysed 86 cases of stretches of talk-in-interaction which embeds alternations between the pronouns *du* and *man*. Our analyses suggest a subtle difference between the two generic pronouns having to do with varying degrees of enactment, not in the legal sense of the word, but, rather, in the ability or potential to make some state-of-affair come to life at the particular moment. We have found two tendencies of enactment in our data set: 1) *du* is

used to talk about the present (or the past, but in a historic present tense), *man* is used to talk about something in the past using past tense, 2) *du* is used to illustrate a state-of-affair or to exemplify a claim; the same cannot be said about an adjoining *man*.

4.1 Tendency one

The first tendency concerns the issues of time and tense; specifically, the first tendency concerns when the informants shift from talking about the past to the present or vice versa. We find that *du* most often is used to talk about state-of-affairs in the present using present tense, whereas *man* is used to talk about something in the past using past tense. Furthermore, we find that shifts from talking about the past to talking about the present or vice versa are marked or accompanied by a shift in the use of *du* and *man*. This tendency is exemplified in the excerpt below. The informant has, prior to the excerpt, told the fieldworker that he dropped out of high school as a young man, the fieldworker then asks him why he dropped out, and the informant explains that he never really felt like attending school; he enrolled in high school because it was the normal thing to do, or, as the informant puts it, it was plainly “what you did” back then:

Excerpt 5³

1. I: altså det gjorde **man** jo ikke?
I mean that was what you (=man) did right?
2. F: °ja° (1.7) det var ikke fordi din far ↑pressede dig? altså
°yes° (1.7) it wasn't because your father put ↑pressure on you? that
3. det lå ba:re i luften.
is it was simply understood.
4. I: ja: og jeg var sådan set ganske godt tilfreds med det ikke.
ye:s and I was actually reasonably happy with it you know.
5. F: °ja°
°yes°
6. I: altså .hh **du** kan sige nu at det var måske var forkert ikke.
but .hh you (=du) might say now that it was wrong right.

In line 1 the informant uses generic *man* to refer to young people in general at the time when he himself was young. In line 6 he uses generic *du* to refer to a unit which is more difficult to define; this unit seems to cover people who in the present day, that is, at the time of the speech event, reflect on the informant's dropping out. Thus, the unit referred to by generic *du* certainly covers the informant himself and his fellow interlocutor, the fieldworker. Excerpt 5

³ This excerpt and the following excerpts are all transcribed in accordance with the standards of conversation analysis principles for notation. A transcription key is found below.

illustrates tendency one in the sense that generic *man* is used to refer to something in the past using past tense, and generic *du* is used to refer to something in the present using present tense. Furthermore, the alternation between the two pronouns and the shift from talking about something in the past to something in the present is accompanied by other cues: a stress on the past tense verb *did* (Danish: *gjorde*) in line 1 and use of the adverb *now* (Danish: *nu*) in line 6. Both cues help to emphasize the differences in time as well as in tense.

In our data we have found fourteen instances of alternations between generic *du* and *man* where *du* is used to talk about something in the present, and *man* is used to talk about something in the past. In contrast, we have only found six instances where *man* is used to talk about something in the present, and *du* is used to talk about something in the past. In qualitative interaction analytical studies a fruitful way to seek confirmation or disconfirmation of a finding is to look for *deviant cases*, that is, occurrences which apparently do not seem to fit the pattern described (see e.g. Heritage 1984). Therefore turning our focus to the instances mentioned above where *du* refers to state-of-affairs in the past and *man* refers to state-of-affairs in the present we find that in two of these six cases *du* is introduced along with a verb in a historic present tense. Use of historic present tense may, then, be one of the factors which may explain deviations from tendency one. In excerpt 6 generic *du* is introduced along with a verb in a historic present tense. In this sample, an informant shifts from *man* to *du* and at the same time shifts from talking about the past using past tense to talking about the past but now using historic present tense. The informant is a trained bank clerk, and in this excerpt she explains why her period of training lasted for three years instead of just two which is more common; the reason was that she did not have a high school diploma when she enrolled in the trainee programme:

Excerpt 6

01. I: jeg havde ikke studentereksamen=hvis **man** havde .h på
I didn't have a high school diploma=if you (=man) had .h at
02. det tidspunkt hvis **man** havde haft det øh studentereksamen (0.4)
that time if you (=man) had had a erhm high school diploma (0.4)
03. .h så havde **man** kunnet nøjes med to års øh elevuddannelse.
.h then you (=man) could have settled with two years of erhm training.
04. F: ja.
yes.
05. I: men det er lavet om igen og jeg ved ikke (0.5) hvordan det er lavet
but it has been changed again and I don't know (0.5) how it has been
06. om til og [hvor]for.
changed and [why].
07. F: [nej]
[no]

08. F: men så skal **man** supplere med nogen øh f'
but do you (=man) then have to complement with any erhm
09. I: ja ja så går **du** på øh (0.2) øh (0.5) købmandsskole
yes yes then you (=du) attend erhm (0.2) erhm (0.5) a commercial school
10. (.) ved siden af.
 (.) *parallelly.*
11. F: ja.
yes.
12. (0.7)
13. I: hvor **du** (.) så har .h hvor **du** skal hvor **du** skal
where you (=du) (.) then .h where you (=du) where you (=du) have to
14. have øh engelsk og tysk på niveau tre ikke det skal **du** simpelt hen
study erhm English and German at level three right you (=du) simply
15. bestå ellers så bliver **du** aldrig bankassistent.
have to pass this otherwise you (=du) will never become a bank clerk.

In the first part of the excerpt, lines 1-3, we see the informant single out her lack of a high school diploma as the reason why her period of training lasted three years. In the second part, lines 5-8, she briefly explains that the rules have been changed. And in the third and final part, lines 9-15, she illuminates the consequences of the former rule stating that bank clerks had to have a high school diploma: she had to attend classes at a commercial school in parallel with her training. In the first part the informant produces a *man*-cluster; in the third part the informant produces a *du*-cluster. In both cases the generic pronouns refer to banking trainees without high school diplomas, thus, in both cases the informant herself is included in the group generically referred to (this inclusion is made particularly clear in lines 1-2). However, there are interesting differences in the way the pronouns are used. In the first part of the excerpt it is very clear that the informant talks about a state-of-affair in the past, both because of the past tense forms and because of adverbial cues such as *at that time* (Danish: 'på det tidspunkt'). In the third part of the excerpt it is less clear that she talks about a state-of-affair in the past, not least because of the present tense forms. But in the second part of the excerpt the informant makes it clear that the high school diploma rule does not apply any longer, it has been changed. Hence, the fieldworker's question in line 8 and the informant's ensuing answer concerns events in the past, and the tense forms are historic present tenses.

Why does the informant shift to historic present tense and generic *du* at this precise moment and more generally why do alternations between *man* and *du* co-occur with a shift from past to present tense? In excerpt 6 the historic present tense is introduced by the fieldworker in line 8 accompanied by a generic *man*, so the shift in tense might be explained as a case of 'accommodation'

(Giles 1973). The use of *du*, however, is wholly due to the informant. It has been suggested by both Langacker (as regards English) and Wiwel (as regards Danish) that past tense basically codes ‘non-immediacy’ (Langacker 1991, 249; Wiwel 1901, 141). Past tense is, thus, a ‘distance marker’; this quality is commonly exploited, for instance, to convey ‘negative politeness’ (Brown & Levinson 1987). Present tense, on the other hand, marks immediacy and non-distance. So the participants’ shift to historic present and present tense in general in a way brings them closer to the informant’s years of banking training.

In conclusion, we find generic *du* associated with verbs in a present as well as a historic present tense (this also applies to clusters of *du*, c.f. p. 21) to support this section’s overall claim that *du* to a higher degree than *man* enacts. An even stronger support for the claim, though, is found in the second tendency.

4.2 Tendency two

The second tendency concerns descriptions vs. illustrations or exemplifications. In cases of alternations between generic *du* and *man*, we find a tendency that *du* is used to illustrate a state-of-affair or to exemplify a claim, and we find that the same cannot be said about the adjoining *man*. Consider the following excerpt. The informant describes her previous house. Although it was located in what is known to be a rather fashionable part of Copenhagen, Østerbro, where, in fact, the fieldworker himself at the time of the recording lives, she did not think much of the neighbourhood:

Excerpt 7

01. I: jeg syntes sgu ikke det var noget sådan (.) overmåde rart kvarter
I really didn't find it (.) a particular nice neighbourhood
02. F: °nej°
°no°
03. I: vel [altså] det var da ikke noget
right [I mean] it wasn't anything
04. F: [°mm°]
[°mm°]
05. F: næ
nope
05. I: d[et var da bare der **man** boe(h)de i(i)kke a(h)ltså
i[et was just a place where you (=man)] li(h)ved ri(h)ght you kno(h)w
06. F: [nej sådan har jeg det også
[no I feel the same way about it
07. F: ja præcis
yes exactly
08. I: ikke a [ltså
right you kn[ow

09. F: [præcis
[*exactly*
10. I: ik[ke altså] der var da (.) der var da .hh ikke noget at se på
ri[ght I mean] there was (.) there wasn't .hh anything to look at
11. F: [ja ja]
[yes yes]
12. I: og sådan lign' (.) altså
or anything' you know
13. F: °nej°
°no°
14. I: **du** kiggede bare på en mur overfor ikke.
you (=du) just stared at a wall across the street right.

In this excerpt, the fieldworker and the informant share similar sentiments towards this particular Copenhagen neighbourhood. The trajectory consists of a series of *assessments* which repeatedly are agreed upon (Pomerantz 1984); however, our main focus of attention will be the alternation from generic *man*, line 5, to generic *du*, line 14. Both generic pronouns are used to express the experiences and sentiments of a person who has lived in the informant's old house, that is, the informant uses the generic pronouns to refer to herself in a generalized manner. But there is an important difference between the actions performed in the two turns in which the pronouns occur. The generic *man* is used in a clause which helps to characterise the neighbourhood as mediocre, as one among many other possible places to live. In contrast, the generic *du* is used in a clause which helps to *illustrate* why this is indeed the case; the mediocrity is in this case exemplified with the lack of view from the house, the fact that the informant merely “stared at a wall across the street”.

A similar difference in usage of the two generic pronouns is seen in the following excerpt. The fieldworker and the informant share a common passion for boxing. At the time of the recording the fieldworker attended boxing practice on a regular basis, the informant, however, had at that time stopped boxing because he could not find the time to do it. Prior to the excerpt the informant expresses his regrets that he had to stop boxing. The fieldworker and the informant then jointly appraise boxing as a sports activity, not least for its physical challenges. In the following sample the participants appraise the fact that boxing practice is physically hard and, thus, raise the pulse rate; the boxer gets exhausted, but in a good way:

Excerpt 8

1. F: ja ↑det=der bliver **man** også øh tæsket igennem (.) helt klart
yes its=you (=man) really get erhm exhausted (.) definitely
2. I: °ja [det gør **man** sgu°.

- °yes [you (=man) sure do°
3. F: [°helt klart°.
[°definitely°
4. I: også selv om **man** ikke slår på hinanden.
that also goes if you (=man) don't pound one another.
5. F: ja.
yes.
6. I: det er bare de der to og en halv time hvor **du** bare (.) banker derudad,
it's just those two and a half hours where you (=du) just (.) keep going at it,
7. F: ja.
yes.
8. I: og **du** er helt oppe i det røde felt en seks' s' seks ti gange ikke?
and you (=du) are all worked up six' s' six to ten times right?

The first instance of generic *man* in this excerpt used to convey a positive stance towards boxing is, in fact, produced by the fieldworker in line 1. However, the informant quickly displays 'affiliation' with the fieldworker in line 2 (Stivers 2008), and continues with an elaboration in line 4. In both turns the informant uses generic *man* to display and to elaborate affiliation with the positive stance towards boxing. The alternation to the use of generic *du* is a slightly different matter, though. They are produced twice and in both cases they are used to illustrate what is so great about boxing: it is intense over a relatively long period of time (line 6), and at certain times it might even be characterised as extremely intense (line 8).

The two previous excerpts are both characteristic of tendency two: generic *du* is embedded within a turn which exemplifies or illustrates some statement or assessment conveyed among other by the means of generic *man*. As we shall see in the following, this tendency is very much in alignment with the way clusters of generic *du* are used. We have found 28 instances of alternation between *du* and *man* where generic *du* helps to illustrate or exemplify something which is conveyed using a generic *man*. As opposed to this, we have only found one instance of a case where generic *man* helps to illustrate or exemplify something which is conveyed using a generic *du*. Thus, from the figures alone it would appear that tendency two is quite strong, that is, that alternations from *man* to *du* in order to illustrate an assessment or a claim is a common conversational move. Furthermore, since this tendency specifically concerns the issue of illustration, we find tendency two to be a particular strong indication that generic *du* to a larger degree than generic *man* is used as a resource for enactment.

4.3 Showing vs. telling

Rhetoricians, literary critics, reporters and teachers in creative writing, among others, inform us that stylistically there is a big difference between *showing* and *telling* something (see e.g. Booth 1961). Our analyses of alternations from generic *du* to *man* or vice versa indicate that *du* to a larger degree than *man* is used to enact something. Another way to put this result is to say that *du* is used to show, whereas *man* to a larger degree is used to tell. This interpretation is consistent with the two tendencies outlined above. Firstly, present tense or, alternatively, historic present tense brings the state-of-affairs which are talked about closer to the speech event than the use of past tense does; often, an alternation from the use of *man* to *du* is realized in parallel with a shift from past tense to present tense or historic present tense. Secondly, *du* is frequently used to illustrate a state-of-affair or to exemplify a claim in cases while an adjoining *man* is embedded in a clause which is used to describe something. The fact that these two tendencies independently support each other and altogether provide a probable account of alternations from *du* to *man* or vice versa, is a good indication of a difference their potentials having to do with the degree of enactment and potential to show rather than to tell.

5. Clusters of *du*

In this part of the article we examine the use of *du* and *man* when each of the pronouns appears twice or more than twice in the same surrounding; we examine *clusters* of *du* and *man* respectively. This also includes cases in which clusters of *du* and of *man* respectively occur in the same surroundings.

Data show a salient tendency regarding clusters of *du*: most frequently they appear in a rather specific environment; they appear during ‘assessment actions’ (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992). During assessment actions speakers are either alone or collectively assessing humans, actions, circumstances or just any given state-of-affair. This implies that most frequently as speakers use clusters of *du*, speakers are assessing some state of affairs. Furthermore, data also show that *du* plays a characteristic role in such assessment actions: *du* is not referring to the referent assessing someone or something rather the referent of *du* is exposed to given circumstances or actions due to the assessed state of affairs. The occurrences of *du* in assessment actions, then, appear as the speaker is exemplifying or rather illustrating *why* some state of affairs are to be assessed in a certain way. Another characteristic of clusters of *du* in assessment actions is that all cases of *du* refers to the same referent in the sequence – it is never the one assessing, it is never referring to a meta level voice commenting on the assessment action taking place or commenting on or modifying the terms chosen. This way of realizing clusters of *du* in assessment actions is illustrated in excerpt 9. The informant works as a cook, and he has, prior to this excerpt, said that he plans to quit this profession. Upon request, he then elaborates his prior statement:

Excerpt 9

- 1 F: men du sagde før at du ville snart holde op på: på ((restaurant))
but you previously said that you would soon quit at ((restaurant))
- 2 I: ja (0.4) **man** bliver gammel for tidligt
yes (0.4) you (=man) get old too early
- 3 F: ja
yes
- 4 I: i det fag
in that line of business
- 5 F: .hhja
.hhyes
 (.)
- 6 I: ja jeg har haft venner og bekendte som også har arbejdet
yes I have had friends and acquaintances who have also worked
- 7 .hh som alt fra køkkenkarle til .hh til kokke (.) de bliver
.hh as everything from dish washers workers to cooks (.) they also
- 8 også trætte af det (.) altså (.) som du nævnte **man** bliver
get tired from it (.) that is (.) as you mentioned you (=man) get
- 9 slidt ned (.) det med den arbejdstid der (.)
worn down with the working hours (.)
- 10 og dårlig luft.
and bad air
- 11 F: ja
yes
- 12 I: og varme og træk og (0.4) og så tror jeg altså det er temmelig
and heat and draught and (0.4) I also think that it is pretty
- 13 giftigt alt det der (.)
poisonous all that (.)
- 14 F: nå.
oh
- 15 I: ol- olie olierøg [ikke]
oi- smoke from oil [right]
- 16 F: [mm]
 [mm]
- 17 I: når **du** steger.
when you (=du) fry
- 18 F: .hhja
.hhyes
- 19 I: det kan jeg ikke det tror jeg sgu (.) men det er ikke
I can't do that I darn well think (.) but it is not
- 20 I: når når **du** (.) hvis **du** tager en flise og vasker den helt

- if if you (=du) (.) if you (=du) take a tile and wash it absolutely*
 21 ren (.) når **du** så går hjem om aftenen så kan
clean (.) then when you (=du) go home at night then you (=du) can
 22 **du** gøre sådan så kan **du** se der er fedt på ikke.
do like this then you (=du) can see that it has grease on it right
 23 F: mm.
mm.
 24 I: det sidder sgu også nede i **dine** lunger.
it is darn well in your (=dine) lungs too
 25 F: mm.
mm.
 (0.5)
 26 I: og det kan altså ikke være sundt det kan jeg ikke
and it really can't be healthy I can't
 27 forestille mig
imagine

In the beginning of the excerpt, the informant provides a negative assessment of his profession; working as a cook is presented as something that you get old by doing. In lines 10 to 15 he continues by assessing the environment in which a cook works: it is characterized by bad air and as being generally poisonous. In lines 17 through 24 follows the noticeable phenomenon: the informant illustrates his assessments by telling the fieldworker what happens to the generic *du* as this *du* cleans the kitchen. The illustrative characteristics are particularly salient in line 21-22; the informant's talk indicates that he enacts a gesture which shows how he easily spots the large amount of grease on the kitchen tiles. Why does the informant provide an illustration at this particular time in the talk-in-interaction? At the time when the informant's assessment might be said to reach its climax, that is, when he proposes that the kitchen air is poisonous, the fieldworker responds with the particle 'nå', a *change-of-state token*, which enacts the registration of "a change in its producer's state of knowledge or information" (Heritage 1998, 291). A possible answer may, therefore, be that the informant simply is encouraged to elaborate upon the fieldworker's display of interest. However, we would like to propose a further possible account. Charles Antaki has argued that the use of assessments in conversations produces so-called *explanation slots*, that is, makes an explanation relevant in the following interaction (Antaki 1994, 81-84). Thus, an answer to the question posed may be that the production of the assessment makes an explanation, or in this case an illustration, relevant as the next move. This probable answer would account for the regularity we find in our data; as in the excerpt above, an informant often conveys an assessment of some state-of-affair, and, then, follows up with an illustration using among other linguistic resources a cluster of generic *du*.

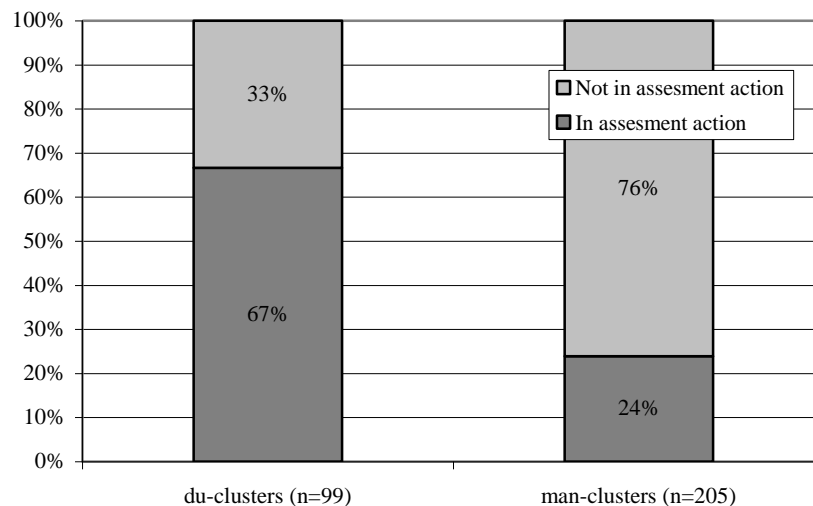
Turning to clusters of *man*, some of these also take place as illustrating parts of assessment actions. However, most often clusters of *man* do not occur in this specific environment, and when clusters of *man* actually do occur as parts of assessment actions, it is often the case that not all the tokens of *man* refer to the same referent. One or two tokens of *man* within a cluster may refer to a referent which is exposed to some circumstances caused by the assessed state of affairs whereas other tokens of *man* within the same cluster do not.

Frequencies of clusters of *du* and *man* occurring in assessment actions of the type described above are given in the table below:

	<i>Du</i>		<i>Man</i>		
	In assessment action	Not in assessment action	In assessment action	Not in assessment action	Total
VGR 87	2	2	1	9	14
VGR 06	3	4	2	7	16
TNI 87	21	11	10	35	77
TNI 06	9	5	5	28	47
ATP 88	6	3	6	19	34
ATP 05	9	3	8	13	33
HTH 88	6	4	9	24	43
HTH 06	10	1	8	21	40

We see here the distribution of all 304 cases of clusters of *du* and *man*. Each row represents a single interview (with the informants' initials and the year of the recordings indicated in the left side column). Clusters of *du* are more likely to occur in assessment actions: in all, except for two interviews, more than half of the clusters of *du* occur in assessment actions, and in five of the interviews clusters of *du* occur twice or more than twice as often as clusters of *du* in other types of actions. In contrast, only one third or less than one third of clusters of *man* occurs in assessment actions.

The diagram below shows the results for all the interviews taken as one:



A chi square test for independence show that the distribution is *not* homogenous ($\chi^2=50.11$, 1 d.f., $p<0.01$). We can thus conclude that clusters of *du* significantly more often than clusters of *man* occur in assessment actions.

Does the fact that clusters of *du* most often appear in assessment actions tell us anything about the meaning of generic *du*? And what does the characteristic role that each case of *du* plays in the assessment action tell us? Does it for example tell us anything about the use of *du* in regulating the social relations between interlocutors?

5.1 Interpersonal aspects of assessments

In discourse and interaction theories, assessments are generally considered to be resources which regulate interpersonal aspects (Hunston & Thompson 1999; Houtkoop-Steenstra 2000; Svennevig 1999; Tannen 1984). Within the paradigm of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Appraisal Theory has been established in order to explore the comprehensive map of evaluative resources and to reach an understanding of “the interplay of interpersonal meaning and social relations in the model of language” (Martin 1999, 148). Appraisal Theory assumes that when speakers assess they express (aspects of) their selves, and as they do this they invite co-interlocutors also to express (aspects of) their selves; furthermore, if two people share self-expressions, then bonding or alignment is likely to occur (see e.g. Martin & White 2005, 95).

Within the paradigm of conversation analysis (CA), it is possible to find a similar understanding that assessments reveal aspects of actors’ identities (see e.g. Clark et al. 2003, 27). Furthermore, a widely accepted CA claim is that an

assessment is a social action which makes a concurrent assessment relevant, that is, if speaker A produces an assessment, speaker B typically produces a concurrent assessment in the following turn (Pomerantz 1984, 59).

Valuable and mutually illuminating insights regarding the issue of assessing are, thus, found in SFL and CA. We suggest that they be summarised as three statements:

- 1) When assessing, speakers reveal aspects of their identity, thereby involving their selves in the interaction.
- 2) When assessing, speakers invite other speakers also to reveal aspects of their identities, hereby inviting them also to involve their selves in the interaction
- 3) When social actors mutually involve, bonding or attentiveness occur.

Based on these three statements we suggest the following two hypotheses regarding the realization of clusters of *du*:

Hypothesis A:

If speakers are involved when they assess, the fact that clusters of *du* most often are realised as parts of assessment actions indicates that *speakers are involved as they realise clusters of du*.

Hypothesis B:

If speakers invite others to also involve as they assess, the fact that clusters of *du* most often are realised as parts of assessment actions indicates that *speakers invite others to involve as they realise clusters of du*.

Such hypotheses seem probable, and they help to explain important aspects regarding the interpersonal potential of generic *du*, but they are difficult to test. For instance, how is it possible to test if involvement is indeed achieved through the realizations of clusters of *du*? A simple answer would be: if speakers produce positive assessments in response to such clusters, mutual involvement and attentiveness is likely. However, our interview data prove such tests difficult. Fieldworkers far from always produce assessments in response to assessments, perhaps in strive for neutrality as a basic element in how to conduct an interview (for a discussion of the sociolinguistic interview as a conversational setting, see Gregersen, Beck Nielsen and Thøgersen in this volume).

5.2 Clusters of *du* and the interpersonal potential of generic *du*

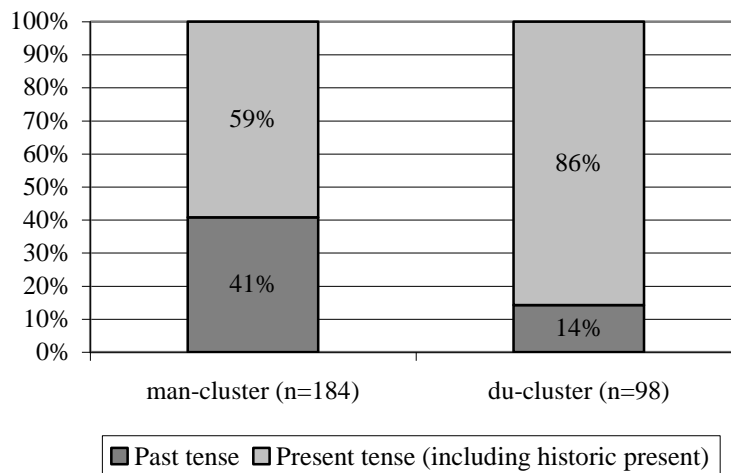
Assuming that involvement is a central aspect in assessment actions, we hypothesized that as interlocutors use clusters of *du*, they are involved and involve. Can we, on the basis of such hypotheses, conclude anything about the

interpersonal potential of generic *du*? Tentatively, we suggest that generic *du* is a resource with the potential of regulating interlocutors' degree of involvement. We suggest that *du* not only occur as interlocutors are already involved, but that generic *du* itself has the potential of construing involvement. This suggestion is based on our findings in the environments in which clusters of *du* occur.

Firstly, it is based on the fact that generic *du* co-occurs with another resource for the establishment of involvement, namely assessments.

Secondly, it is based on the observation that clusters of *du* do not occur randomly during assessment actions. They appear at specific moments where speakers put an extra effort in establishing intersubjective common understanding: they occur as the assessment is illustrated, that is, as the assessing speaker provides the co-interlocutor with the possibility of picturing the representation. In this way the speaker makes what is talked about imaginable to the co-interlocutor, and by imagining what it is like being in the specific situation him- or herself, the co-interlocutor is more likely to involve in the situation illustrated by the assessing speaker.

Thirdly, it can be observed that clusters of *du* co-occur with present tense and even historical present. The diagram below shows the results for all the interviews taken as one:



A chi square test for independence show that the distribution is *not* homogenous ($\chi^2 = 19.54$, 1 d.f., $p < 0.01$). We can thus conclude that clusters of *du* significantly more often than clusters of *man* occur in present tense.

By using present tense, the speaker makes the experience come to life for the speaker (see also p. 11 on present tense as a non-distance marker), hereby making it more obvious for him or her to involve. In the following, and final,

excerpt we see an example of this; the informant talks about playing a particular Danish variant of hide and seek as a child:

Excerpt 10

01. I: **man** skulle være femten mindst eller °sådan noget ikke°.
you (=man) had to be at least fifteen or something along that size.
02. F: femten?
fifteen?
03. I: ja:=
yes=
04. F: =til hvad?
=for what?
05. I: ti femten så legede **man** då:seskjul.
ten fifteen then you (=man) would play hide an seek.
06. F: ↓ nå.
oh.
07. (0.7)
08. F: skulle **man** v' være minimum femten for det?
did you (=man) minimum have to fifteen to do that?
09. I: ja ↑ helst ti ellers bliver det ikke så sjovt vel?
yes preferably teen otherwise it wouldn't be as fun would it?
10. F: nej hah hah [hah.
no hah hah [hah.
11. I: [hvis der kun er fire.
[if there are only four.
12. F: nej .h
no .h
13. I: >så var der også< det var jo s:kægge gader at
>then there were also< it was funny streets to
14. lege i (.) altså dåseskjul fordi de er jo (0.4) **du** kan jo
play in (.) hide and seek because they are (0.4) you (=du) can't
15. ikke slippe væk vel?
get away right
16. F: nej
no
17. I: den er jo aflang (.) og **du** bliver nødt til at gemme dig
it is oblong (.) and you (=du) have to hide
18. bag bilerne og [stå] oppe på dækkene og kofangerne og
behind the cars and [stand] at the tires and the bumpers and
19. F: [hhja]
[yes]
20. I: sådan noget.

such things.

The informant conveys a positive assessment of the long and narrow streets in which he and his friends played as children. It was fun to run around and play in them. In lines 14 through 20 the informant accounts for his assessment, he illustratively explains why the streets were fun to run around and play in. The latter is, of course, characteristic of all the clusters of *du* in assessment actions; the generic pronouns occur as the speaker explains or illustrates his assessment – it is *du* who is hiding behind cars and standing at tires. The speaker assesses an action he himself was once a part of, but now he presents it as something that is happening to *du*, happening here and now. Hereby, the speaker invites his co-interlocutor to imagine what it was like playing in the streets, and, hereby to involve.

The phenomenon that generic *du* co-occurs with present tense was also found in our analyses of alternations between *du* and *man*. Excerpt 10 above illustrates not only the fact that clusters of generic *du* often co-occurs with present tense, but also the finding that alternations from the use of generic *man* to the use of generic *du* are often accompanied by a shift in tense: from past tense to (historic) present. When initially informing the fieldworker of the nature of playing hide and seek, that is, when explaining that a minimum of 10-15 children ideally should participate in the game, the informant uses generic *man* in lines 1 and 5. But when illustrating the assessment which follows this explanation, the informant alternates to the use of generic *du*. In the environment of alternations from the use of *man* to the use of *du* the co-occurrence of present tense was interpreted in terms of enactment. However, enactment and involvement can be seen as related: bringing state of affairs to life for co-interlocutors implies bringing them closer to what is talked about, and this can be seen as inviting or encouraging them to involve in what is talked about.

In our analyses of alternations between *du* and *man* we suggested that generic *du* is a resource for showing something as opposed to telling about that something. Hence, we now argue that not only do the findings in our analyses of clusters of *du* support our suggestion that generic *du* has an interpersonal potential of construing involvement, the general findings in our analyses of alternations between *du* and *man* can be said to support the same suggestion.

6. Conclusion

This article has suggested the application of interaction analyses in order to illuminate otherwise opaque differences between the different variants of a sociolinguistic variable. The case has been pronouns with generic reference in Danish with the variants *du* and *man*.

As regards propositional meaning, there is no difference between the two pronouns in contemporary spoken Danish. In other respects, however,

interactional analyses revealed important differences. Analyses of alternations on a local basis between *man* and *du* showed that *du* to a larger degree than *man* is used as a resource to enact something, that is, to show rather than to tell something. Analyses of clusters of *man* and *du* showed that clusters of *du* to a larger degree than clusters of *man* are used to assess; speakers thereby involve themselves and invite other parties to involve as they use clusters of *du*. More generally our analyses suggest that generic *du* has an interpersonal potential of construing involvement which separates it from *man*.

These results are in alignment with analyses of the meaning of generic second person pronouns stating that the generically used pronoun retains some of its second person meaning also when used generically, not in a truth conditional sense but with respect to viewpoint. By using the pronoun the addressee is invited to see the phenomena in question from the inside, so to speak, that is from the viewpoint of the generalized person, while this connotation is not part of the meaning of *man*. The reason for the differences in the use of *du* and *man* revealed by the interaction analyses may thus very well be connected to the second person meaning *du* most frequently occurs with (i.e. its non-generic use).

The application of interaction analyses to illuminate a sociolinguistic variable in usage on a local basis has implied a movement from community to conversation. Now is the time to move back to community. This movement implies reflecting upon questions such as these: Does the general rise in the use of generic *du* reflect developments in the way people interact with each other in more or less formal settings such as sociolinguistic interviews? Or even in other less formal settings in everyday life?

Interactional behaviour is not random; the way people interact with each other is attuned to, as Erving Goffman has put it, an ‘interaction order’ (Goffman 1983). Furthermore, interactional behaviour is an ongoing moral affair; as John Heritage puts it, every contribution from a participant in social interaction is “intelligible and accountable as a sustaining of, or a development or violation, etc. of, some order of activity” (Heritage 1984, 110). Both the interaction order and the way this order is reproduced or negotiated in everyday interaction reflect societal norms.

With respect to changes in interactional behaviour, we find it indeed very likely that there is a linkage between the rise of generic *du* and the issue of intimacy. Some scholars have argued that late-modernity discourse, not least in the Medias, reveals a trend towards intimization and personification (Fairclough 1992, 1995a, 1995b). If we are indeed in the midst of such an intimization process, the overall rise in the use of generic *du* may be one of its symptoms and consequences; its potential as a recourse for enactment and involvement may come in handy people who do not know each other very well, or do not know each other at all in advance, interact with one another. If felicitous, enactment is a very useful way of establishing intersubjectivity quickly, probably one of the

important ingredients in intimacy. Involvement is also likely to be one of the important ingredients in intimacy. And as we have shown in this paper, enactment and involvements are both central aspects in the interpersonal potential of generic *du*.

Hence, if we accept that an intimation and personification process has been going on in the last decades, this explains the increased use of generic *du* within the group of informants we have studied in the interaction analytical studies described in this article, that is, Copenhageners born 1942-63. However, there are some issues to be addressed then: Firstly, why is the use of generic *du* higher in Copenhagen than in the rest of the country at the time of the old recording in the 1980's? Secondly, why is the use of generic *du* lower among younger speakers than in the cohort born 1942-63? Does the lower share of generic *du* in these groups of speakers indicate that they are less intimate and personal than the older speakers from Copenhagen?

The only way to answer these questions would of course be to include these groups of speakers in a series of comparative interactional analyses. As we have not performed any such analyses, our answers can only be provisional. With respect to the regional differences in the use of *du* they may actually reflect interactional differences of the kind proposed above, as the intimation and personification processes may be urban phenomena spreading from Copenhagen to the rest of the country. With respect to the age differences this explanation is unlikely as it is not generally assumed that the trends towards intimation and personification has ceased or declined. The younger speakers would therefore be assumed to at least as influenced by them as the older speakers.

In both cases we need to take into account that using *du* as generic pronoun is not the only way to construe involvement and enactment. Speakers having a lower share of generic *du* may therefore be as influenced by the intimation and personifications processes as speakers with a higher share, but they may use other cues to convey it to their interlocutors. The bond between generic *du* on one side and intimation and personification on the other is of course not direct and unconditional. There may be strong internal linguistic motivations for using generic *du* as a marker of intimacy and involvement, but it is still a language use which has to be acquired by contact with other users - people we want to behave like - and it may go out of fashion again (i.e. its social meaning may change over time).

Transcription key

- [: the beginning of overlapping turns
- (.) : pause of less than 0.2 second
- (0.7) : approximate length of pause in seconds
- CAPITALS: loud volume
- °word° : spoken softly

>fast<	: spoken fastly
<slow>	: spoken slowly
.h	: a person inhales
h.	: a person exhales
↑word	: rise in local intonation
↓word	: fall in local intonation
<i>Italics</i>	: English translation
Bold	: the Danish generic pronouns are marked in bold

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