

PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STANDARDS OF ADDRESSING IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA¹

Heinz L. Kretzenbacher

Abstract

This article investigates the use of German forms of address in different national and regional varieties of German, as perceived by speakers of those varieties. For particular domains such as the workplace, informants report significant regional and national differences in use not only of pronominal address but also of nominal address and linguistic structures linked to addressing such as greetings. The data also confirm differences in information about and sensitivity for different national varieties between speakers of the dominant and of non-dominant varieties characteristic for asymmetrical pluricentricity.

Keywords: Forms of address; Greetings; German; Pluricentric languages; Language attitudes.

1. Introduction

Among the linguistic means that help the pragmatic task of positioning speaker and interlocutors in their social field of interaction (cf. Carbaugh 1996: 143; Svennevig 1999: 19), addressing is one of the most prominent. Native speakers are usually quite aware of this pragmatic power of address, as recent studies have shown (cf. Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009), particularly native speakers of languages that have a rich arsenal of address forms and related structures, such as German (cf. Kretzenbacher, Clyne & Schüpbach 2006; Kretzenbacher 2010).

As recently as 2008, Klaus Schneider and Anne Baron (2008: 6) lament the lack of studies in pragmatic variation, both regional and – in the case of pluricentric languages – national. Address being a very good example for a micropragmatic (cf. Muhr 2008: 211) feature, it can be stated with respect to it that pluricentric variation has found considerable attention in the last years. The Melbourne address project has collected and analysed a great amount of data now accessible in publications such as Clyne, Kretzenbacher, Norrby & Schüpbach (2006) for German and Swedish, Kretzenbacher, Clyne & Schüpbach (2006) for German, Norrby (2006) for Swedish, and Clyne, Norrby & Warren (2009) for English, German and Swedish.² Muhr (2008)

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² French was another language investigated by the Melbourne address project, although in its case not under the aspect of pluricentricity.

and Warga (2008) have also included address in their respective studies on pragmatic features in the Austrian and German national standards of the German language.

This paper intends to contribute to the study of diatopic variation of address in German which is emerging as an exemplary field of study in pragmatic variation,³ by reporting on data from the Melbourne address project that indicate perceptions German speakers have of their own and other national and regional varieties of address in German.

2. Diatopic variation and forms of address in German

2.1. Diatopic variation

Despite the levelling effect that developments such as industrialisation, urbanisation and the rise of mass media have had on dialectal variation within the German speaking area of Europe, intensified in the case of Germany and Austria by mass migration in the wake of the two World Wars, there is still quantitatively and socially significant variation in German to date. While for reasons particular to the historical standardisation process of German, the Low German area in the north has less and mainly rural remnants of dialect, in the Central and Upper German areas there is a wide scope of living dialectal variation often highly important for social positioning of interlocutors.⁴

German is also characterized by different national standards of which the standard of the Federal Republic of Germany is the dominant variety for obvious reasons including number of speakers and media concentration. Apart from the different national standards, German has regional supra-dialectal varieties with some standardized features. For example, there are typical „northern German” vs. „southern German” standards in vocabulary (e.g. *Sonnabend* vs. *Samstag*), pronunciation (e.g. the “northern” pronunciation [ɪç] vs the “southern” [ɪk] of the suffix <-ig> as in *König* ‘king’) and morphology (e.g. the perfect tense auxiliaries for verbs of position). Also, there is the special case of standardized features in the eastern states of the Federal Republic of Germany, the territory of the former GDR. While Austrian and Swiss standards of German have developed differently from those in today’s Federal Republic of Germany over centuries, the GDR as a state existed for only 40 years. In the GDR, however, there was a strong ideology-driven tendency for different standards from West Germany in the public register and consequently characteristic differences between public and private registers. East Germans are still very aware of this linguistic situation, although it has been obsolete for 20 years now. So, as Clyne, Norrby & Warren (2009: 128) note,

“for the eastern Germans today, address differences are not only regional, they are also historical, marking the difference between what it was like in the GDR and what it is like in post-unification Germany.”

³ Including, apart from the studies on regional and national variation within the German speaking area of Europe already mentioned, variation within German speaking immigrant communities in Canada (Howell and Klassen 1971, Liebscher, Daily-O’Cain, Müller & Reichert 2010) and New Zealand (Stoffel 1983a; 1983b).

⁴ For a recent study of dialect use in Austria, see Soukup 2009.

2.2. Addressing in German

German offers pronominal as well as nominal structures for addressing. Typically, pronominal structures, along with the personal forms of verbs, are used for personal deixis and nominal address forms for vocatives, but it is possible to use pronominal address for vocatives and nominal address for deixis in some cases.

Figure 1: Pronominal and nominal address for deictic and vocative use in German (cf. Kretzenbacher 2010: 2)

	<i>pronominal</i>	<i>nominal</i>
Deixis	<p><i>Haben Sie schon das Neueste gehört?</i> ‘Have you (V) heard the latest news yet?’</p> <p><i>Du bist wirklich Gold wert!</i> ‘You (T) are really worth your weight in gold!’</p>	<p><i>Hat es dem Herrn geschmeckt?</i> ‘Has Sir enjoyed his meal?’</p>
Vocative	<p><i>Das tut mir jetzt echt Leid, du!</i> ‘I’m really sorry, man (T)!’</p> <p><i>He, Sie!</i> ‘Hey, you (V)!’</p>	<p><i>Frau Meier, bitte ans Telefon!</i> ‘Ms. Meier, phone call for you!’</p>

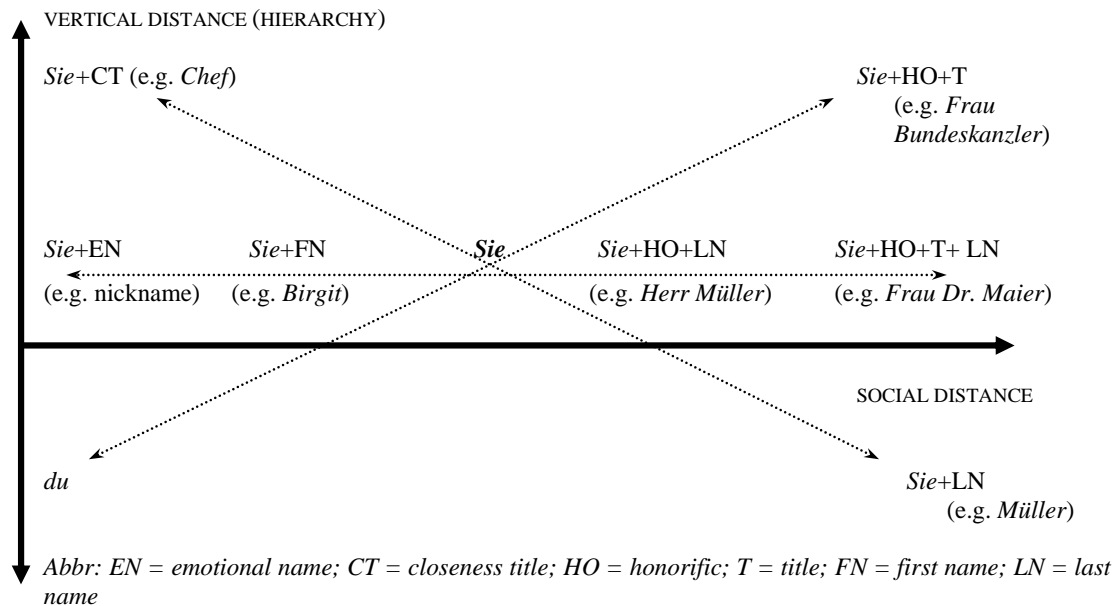
German is not a pro-drop language, and with very few exceptions (such as the imperative of the T address) the personal pronoun must be used with every address form of the verb. Address avoidance or the use of nominal address for deixis appears awkward in most cases. Pronominal address is therefore the central feature of addressing in German. However, combining pronominal address with peripheral address features such as nominal address and greetings turns the seemingly simple binary opposition between a T pronoun and a V pronoun into a potentially complex system that is a very supple instrument for the social positioning of interlocutors.

Like many European languages, German offers a binary T/V system of address pronouns, with the T pronoun *du* (plural: *ihr*) and the V pronoun *Sie* (plural *Sie*). There are clear situational contexts for the choice of either the T or the V pronoun in German. Family and close friends are typically addressed with the T pronoun, strangers, particularly in official encounters, with the V pronoun. So, unsurprisingly, all our informants say they would address either of their parents with *du*, and a police officer with *Sie*. While the T, respectively V situations have a clear core, they have fuzzy edges. With distant relatives or the parents of a partner, the V pronoun is sometimes seen as an option, while in some service encounters, for example with shop assistants in shops where one is a regular customer, a few informants would choose the T pronoun (cf. Kretzenbacher, Clyne & Schüpbach 2006: 17.3-17.6). However, what little variation in answers there is, is more specific for age groups than for research sites.

Outside clear situational contexts, the choice of address pronoun is critical in first encounters between adults. This choice is made according to network preferences, individual preferences and social variables such as relative age of interlocutors and perceived degree of hierarchical and social distance between them. (cf. Kretzenbacher 2010: 7-14)

The combination of a nominal address with the pronominal address allows the speaker to fine-tune the expression of his or her perceived vertical – that is hierarchical – and social distance from their respective interlocutor. Within a V situation, for example, a person much higher in the hierarchy than and with maximal social distance from the speaker would be addressed with honorific plus title, but without using their first or last name (*Frau Bundeskanzler(in)*, *Herr Major*), while a person considerably lower in the hierarchy than and with maximal social distance from the speaker would be addressed with their last name only („*Kommen Sie mal her, Müller!*“)

Figure 2: Dimensions of social positioning by pronominal and nominal address in German (cf. Kretzenbacher 2010: 15-16)



There are greetings in German, both formal and informal, that are used across the German speaking area, such as *guten Tag / guten Abend*, *hallo*, *hi*, *auf Wiedersehen*, *ciao* and *tschüss*. Others are regional or restricted to one particular national standard, such as *grüß Gott / grüß dich* (specific for the southern part of the German speaking area), *grüezi* (Switzerland), *servus* (Austria) or *baba* (eastern Austria). Many greetings in German also have affinities to specific address forms, respectively they are perceived as appropriate or inappropriate in combination with specific address forms. „Guten Tag, Schatzi!“ would probably be considered a weird combination, „Ciao, Frau Bundeskanzler!“ definitely so.

3. Discussion of the data

3.1. Data collection

The data were collected between 2003 and 2006 in focus group discussions, network interviews and participant observation in three research sites: Leipzig in eastern Germany, Mannheim in western Germany and Vienna in Austria, and also by analysis of and participation in a wide scope of German speaking online fora. The type of fora spanned the scale from discussion fora for specific articles provided by the online editions of newspapers (such as [derStandard.at](http://www.derStandard.at)) to generic forum providers (such as www.internet-foren.de/) where topic-specific threads can be started by any member, and a wide scope of fora revolving around specific interests in between, from semi-official fora provided by associations such as the *Verein deutsche Sprache e.V.* ('Association for German Language Inc. '; www.vds-ev.de/forum/) to fora dedicated to popular culture phenomena such as the TV series *The Simpsons* (<http://simpsonsparadise.de/>).

While the nature of online fora, with the participants usually only identifying themselves by forum specific nicknames, does not allow to determine the social, regional and gender composition of the group of participants, participants in focus groups and network interviews were chosen in a way to give representative samples of competent speakers of German in the respective research sites. Local in-country research assistants (postgraduate students who had undergone a training session with the Melbourne researchers) with their local knowledge were instrumental in inviting participants into the focus groups and in starting the social networks for the network interviews.

The focus groups, which met once in 2003 at the start of the project and again in 2005 towards the end of the project, consisted of 16 participants in each research site, 48 in total. They were almost completely gender-balanced (the Mannheim and Vienna groups had 9 males and 7 females, the Leipzig group 8 of each), and represented a wide scope of ages (from 18 to over 65) and of professions and social backgrounds (although due to the social networks of our research assistants, there was a certain bias towards the middle class and university students). The network interviews consisted of a closed questionnaire the participants were asked to fill in and immediately afterwards a semi-structured interview on address practices that the research assistants did with each informant. The choice of participants again was designed to achieve a representative sample of competent speakers of German from the respective region for each research site: The research assistants chose 11 participants from their own respective social networks (such as friends, family members, co-workers or fellow students). Each of these members of the primary networks was asked to select five members of their own respective social networks for further interviews. The total number of the network interview informants for the German-speaking research sites was 66. As was the case with the focus groups, the network interview informant group was roughly gender balanced and represented a wide scope of professions, social backgrounds and ages.

The closed questionnaires asked for the participants' own use of address forms in a number of different situations and different domains, such as in service encounters, asking a stranger for directions in an unfamiliar town in their own country, in one's own family, one's own workplace etc. The semi-structured interview immediately following

the questionnaire gave the informants the opportunity to elaborate on some of the addressing situations covered in the questionnaire and to comment on further questions such as perceived changes in address behaviour over the last decade or so, the appropriate age from which young persons should be addressed with *Sie* rather than *du*, experiences of unexpected address forms, perception of regional and/or national differences in German address etc.⁵

In the following discussion, data from online fora are identified with URL, participant nickname and date and time of original posting; data from focus groups with research site, number of focus group (first or second focus group meeting), profession, gender and age of informant; data from network interviews with research site, running number of questionnaire within the research site, profession, gender and age of informant.

3.2. *Perceptions of standards*

As far as the core situations for clear T or clear V address are concerned, there are no regional or national differences between our research sites. However, our data suggest domain-specific differences in work situations:

Figure 3: Addressing superiors at work, summary by location (cf. Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 131)

	T-T	%	T or V- T or V	%	all or some T	%	V-V	%
Leipzig (N=63)	13	21%	5	8%	18	29%	45*	71%
Mannheim (N=64)	16	25%	4	6%	20	31%	44*	69%
Vienna (N=58)	34	59%	2	3%	36	62%	22	38%
Total (N=185)	63	34%	11	6%	74	40%	111	60%

*Non-reciprocal use: One participant each in Leipzig and Mannheim reported using V with superiors while receiving T from them.

Of the 66 questionnaire-based interviews we did in each of the three research sites, most informants felt confident to indicate their typical address behaviour towards their superiors at work. Less than 40% of the Viennese informants said that they were on *Sie* terms with their work superiors. Almost 60% of these informants reported being on mutual *du* terms with their superiors at work, and a few others told us that they were on *du* terms at least with some of their work superiors. These Austrian data are in strong contrast to the ones collected in Germany: Only a quarter of the Mannheim informants who answered these questions were on *du* terms with their work superiors, and this percentage was even lower in Leipzig.

⁵ Details on the participant choice in all seven countries and four languages covered by the Melbourne address project can be found in Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 33-35; the questionnaire in Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 164-167.

Figure 4: Addressing colleagues at work, summary by location (cf. Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 131)

	T-T	%	T or V- T or V	%	all or some T	%	V-V	%
Leipzig (N=65)	36	55%	21	32%	57	88%	8	12%
Mannheim (N=64)	41	64%	11*	17%	52	81%	12	19%
Vienna (N=63)	51	81%	8*	13%	59	94%	4	6%
Total (N=192)	128	67%	40	21%	168	88%	24	13%

*Potentially non-reciprocal use: One participant each in Mannheim and Vienna reported using either T or V while receiving V (e.g. with apprentices).

As is to be expected, more informants in all research sites reported that they were on *du* terms with all or at least some of their work colleagues than was the case with their superiors. Again, the Austrians clearly lead the statistic, and the east Germans are in last place.

To a lesser degree, the stronger tendency towards the T pronoun address in the Austrian work situations also applies for communications with clients, with almost a quarter of the Viennese informants reporting that they are on *du* terms with at least some of their clients. Again, our German informants lag significantly behind in that statistic, although the percentages of the T pronoun are generally lower across all research sites, and in this case, Mannheim comes last:

Figure 5: Addressing clients, summary by location

	T-T	%	T or V- T or V	%	all or some T	%	V	%
Leipzig (N=62)	4	6%	4	6%	8	13%	54	87%
Mannheim (N=59)	3	5%	1	2%	4	7%	55	93%
Vienna (N=50)	5	10%	6	12%	11	22%	39	78%
Total (N=171)	12	7%	11	6%	23	13%	148	87%

Our data confirm remarks in the literature – mostly based on anecdotal evidence – that in Austria the scope for *du* situations extends further out from family and close friends, for example to the workplace, than in Germany.

The relatively low frequency of *du* in East Germany outside family and the circle of close friends was commented on by some of our Leipzig informants. Some of them saw the higher frequency of *du* in GDR times as a symptom of a more relaxed way people used to interact with each other then:

- (1) *Es ist eindeutig zum Sie übergegangen. Ich bin auch der Meinung, dass die Menschen nicht mehr so locker miteinander umgehen wie es früher mal war.*

‘There has definitely been a change towards *Sie*. I also think that people don’t interact in as relaxed a way any more as they used to do.’ (Leipzig, Q1, economist/engineer, f, 47)

Another informant from Leipzig feels that the specific *du* that has disappeared with the GDR was the public *du* of comradeship in the communist system:

- (2) *Ich stelle heute fest, dass Leute, die sich früher gekannt haben und dann sich wiedersehen, dass sie sich nicht unbedingt mehr duzen. Um [...] was zu vertuschen vielleicht, weil manche um ihre Vergangenheit nicht umgehen können, was weiss ich, in der Partei oder FDJ-Leute oder sonstwo gearbeitet haben, die siezen sich auf einmal.*

‘I am noticing these days that people who used to know each other and then meet again, that they don’t necessarily call each other *du* any more. Maybe in order [...] to hide something, because some people can’t deal with their past, or whatever, in the party or FDJ [communist youth organisation] people or wherever else they might have worked, those people suddenly address each other with *Sie*.’ (Leipzig, Q3, administrator/translator, f, 52)

Indeed the ritual comradeship *du* which has a long tradition in leftist parties in the German speaking area was deeply ingrained in GDR partyspeak (cf. Besch 1998: 37-39). There were even attempts in the 1950s, albeit failed ones, to make *du* the compulsory address throughout the GDR (cf. Finkenstaedt 1963: 247). The change from an official *du* to a private *Sie* is not necessarily a consequence of the end of the GDR, though. The characteristic differences between public and private registers in the GDR sometimes led to the situational compartmentalizing explained by the GDR linguist Henrik Becker in 1960, “[...] daß man während der Tagung sagt: ‘Genosse Lampertz, du hast uns aus dem Herzen gesprochen’; nachher geht man hin und sagt: ‘Werter Herr Professor, das haben Sie wunderbar gesagt.’” [‘that one says during the congress: ‘comrade Lampertz, you [T] took the words right out of our mouths’, afterwards one approaches the speaker saying ‘dear professor, you [V] said that wonderfully well’] (Becker 1960: 43; cf. Kretzenbacher 1991: 56).

The communist honorific *Genosse/Genossin* (comrade) usually went with the T pronoun *du* in the GDR, while the civil honorific *Herr* (or *Frau*), here in combination with the academic title, would normally be combined with the V pronoun *Sie*. The latter is also the case in West Germany and Austria, although in Austria a collegial/congenial combination of an honorific, a title such as *ambassador* and *du*, can sometimes be encountered in a greeting such as „Grüß dich, Herr Botschafter!“ (cf. Clyne, Norrby and Warren 2009: 139).

Another GDR specific form was the combination of *Kollege/Kollegin* with *du*. It was always used without the honorifics *Herr* or *Frau*, but could be combined with last name and/or academic or professional title and was the standard address within the official GDR trade unions (Besch 1998: 33; Kuntzsch 2004: 154). The GDR author Monika Maron called it „*das allgegenwärtige Gewerkschaftsdu: Kollege Meier, hast du dich schon mit dem Kollegen Müller beraten?*“ [the omnipresent trade union *du: Kollege Meier, have you [T] talked that over with Kollege Müller yet?*] (Maron 1987: 6; cf. Kretzenbacher 1991: 55). Immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when east German academics could freely meet their western colleagues in many cases for the first time, my experience was that the eastern German colleagues were astonished by the friendly, but formal address amongst academics *Herr Kollege/Frau Kollegin* plus *Sie* usual in West Germany, Austria and Switzerland, because they associated *Kollege/Kollegin* with the ritual GDR trade unionist address.

While there was generally little awareness of differences in national standards of address between Germany and Austria with our German informants in Leipzig and Mannheim, the impression of a more frequent use of titles in Austria was mentioned in all focus groups and many questionnaires across the three research sites (cf. Clyne, Norrby and Warren 2009: 139). This impression is confirmed by our network interviews:

Figure 6: Use of titles in addressing, summary by location (cf. Clyne, Norrby and Warren 2009: 40)

Use of titles with	Superiors at work	Work colleagues at same level	School teachers	University teachers	(N)
Leipzig	7	1	-	13	21
Mannheim	-	-	2	4	6
Vienna	9	3	53	56	121
Total	16	4	55	73	148

Austrians reported most title use, particularly in education contexts. In Austria, secondary school teachers are usually addressed with *Herr Professor* or *Frau Professor*, and the same address is used with university teachers. While in West Germany academic title use in addressing university teachers has almost completely disappeared since the student revolts of the 1960s, the same was not the case in the GDR where no student revolt took place then, and remnants of the respectful title address for academic teachers are still evident in eastern Germany.

The co-occurrence of frequent title use on the one hand and frequent T pronoun use on the other hand in Austria is commented upon by some of our German informants, sometimes as a reason for making it impossible to tell whether Austrians are more formal or more informal than Germans in address use:

- (3) *Man lächelt sehr oft über die vielen, vielen Titel, die in Österreich benutzt werden: Hofrat, Geheimrat, Doktor, Magister. Nie würde ein Deutscher den Magistertitel auch nur in den Mund nehmen, in Österreich sehr, sehr häufig; und das ist die Welt, wie sie sich darstellt auf den ersten Blick. Aber sobald man Menschen besser kennt, und das ist in Österreich schon ab dem 5. oder 6. Glas Wein, kommt da sehr schnell das Du, sehr viel früher als in Deutschland [...]. Auf den ersten Blick ist die Distanz größer, aber später viel näher.*

‘People are very often amused about the many, many titles used in Austria [adds examples]. A German would never even speak the title *Magister* [= academic Master title], but it’s used very, very frequently in Austria; and that’s the world as it presents itself at first glance. But as soon as you know people better, and in Austria that is already the case with the fifth or sixth glass of wine [you have had together], the *du* comes very quickly, much earlier than it would in Germany [...]. At first glance the distance is greater, but later it is much closer.’ (Mannheim, Q10, junior academic, m, 29)

The fact that both the use of titles and of T pronouns in addressing are reported in significantly higher frequency in Vienna than in either of our German research sites might appear paradoxical at first glance, since in Germany, and even in most cases in Austria, title and T pronoun are mutually exclusive. Both of the Austrian characteristics have their roots in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: The collegial workplace *du* spread from the mutual *du* of nobility within the officers' corps of the Austro-Hungarian army and the public administration bureaucracy to other work environments.⁶ And, while – differently from the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland – in Austria the public use of nobility titles has been outlawed since 1919,⁷ academic and professional titles have certainly refilled this emptied niche in honorific status symbols since. Along with other address characteristics from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, such as the greeting *szervusz* in Hungarian (cf. Besch 1998: 140-141), the frequent use of titles that distinguishes Austrian German from the other national varieties has been shown to be consistent with title use in the Czech Republic, across linguistic and political boundaries (cf. Ehlers 2004). And the common roots of higher frequency of both *du* and title use which lie in the nobility that formed the higher echelons of both bureaucracy and military in the Double Monarchy also explains that unlike in Germany, use of *du* and of title in addressing is not mutually exclusive in Austria. William M. Johnston (2001: 19-22) uses the two distinctive types of social coherence of *Gemeinschaft* (community) vs. *Gesellschaft* (society) introduced into sociology by Ferdinand Tönnies (cf. Tönnies 2010)⁸ to explain the specific Austrian situation, arguing that the higher frequency of *du* address in Austria is a symptom of the survival of pre-modern *Gemeinschaft* structures in modern Austrian *Gesellschaft*. The same spirit of *Gemeinschaft* lives on in mutual use of title amongst social equals, often in conjunction with *du*.

3.3. Awareness of regional and national variation

Our data support findings in the research literature about “the characteristic of asymmetrical pluricentricity that people from the dominant nation(s) using the language will be poorly informed about the other national varieties, sometimes equating them with regional varieties.” (Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 145; cf. Clyne 1992: 460).

Across all research sites, as well as in the online forum corpus, rural and regional areas are frequently perceived as having a higher frequency of *du* as opposed to metropolitan areas.

(4) *Auf dem Land wird eher geduzt.*

‘People use *du* sooner/more frequently in the countryside.’ (Vienna, Q6, academic, f, 24)

⁶ Cf. Besch 1998: 101-103; Johnston 2001: 17; Sproß 2001: 131-136.

⁷ *Gesetz vom 3. April 1919 über die Aufhebung des Adels, der weltlichen Ritter- und Damenorden und gewisser Titel und Würden*, StGBI. Nr. 211/1919, most recently changed by BGBI I Nr. 2/2008 (1. BVRBG).

⁸ Tönnies's study was originally published in 1887 as *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Culturformen* (Leipzig: Fues), the most recent publication of it from 2010 is a reprint of the 8th edition (Leipzig: Buske) of 1935, the last edition published during Tönnies's lifetime.

- (5) *Während in Bayern in vielen Gegenden das "Du" ganz normal ist, wird man in München angeschaut wie der letzte Dreck, wenn man jemanden duzt.*
'While in most regions of Bavaria the *du* is completely normal, they look at you as if you were the lowest scum if you address someone with *du* in Munich [= capital of Bavaria]'
(erzbengel; 29.09.2006 12:26 <http://derStandard.at/?id=2603338>)

Within Germany, the southern part of the country is often seen as the typical rural region, in Austria it is western Austria:

- (6) *Im Süden wird eher geduzt, ich würde es aber am Dialekt festmachen, in ländlichen Gebieten, wo noch oft Dialekt gesprochen wird.*
'They use *du* sooner/more in the south, I think that has to do with dialect, in rural areas where dialect is still spoken a lot.' (Mannheim, Q2, manager, m, 33)
- (7) *Also ich komme aus Bayern und da nehmen wir fast immer das „Du“ her.*
'Well, I am from Bavaria and we almost always use *du* there.' (Stan; 31.05.2005 21:03
<http://www.bdph.de/forum/showthread.php?t=1701>)
- (8) *In Österreich gibt es den Spruch: Von Innsbruck bis Salzburg sind Schaffner und Lokführer perdu, danach persie.*
'In Austria, they say: From Innsbruck to Salzburg, the conductor and the driver of the train are on *du* terms, east of Salzburg they are on *Sie* terms.'
(erzbengel; 29.09.2006 12:26 <http://derStandard.at/?id=2603338>)

The informants from Leipzig and Mannheim, as the representatives of the dominant national variety of German, are generally not aware of address standards in the other national varieties. In our focus groups and network interviews, as well as in online fora, German speakers from the Federal Republic of Germany frequently do not think that there are any differences at all. If they acknowledge differences, they often speak from anecdotal evidence, and such impressions are not consistent:

- (9) *Mir persönlich bekannte Österreicher sind schon lockerer, Schweizer sind so eher steif.*
'Austrians I know personally are rather more relaxed, the Swiss are quite a bit more formal.' (Mannheim, Q1, academic, m, 37)
- (10) *[...] lockerer in der Schweiz, konservativer in Österreich*
'more relaxed in Switzerland, more conservative in Austria' (Leipzig Q3, retired physiotherapist, f, 65)

Our Viennese informants are more consistent in their impressions of national differences. While not all of them are aware of such differences, in most cases the Swiss are seen as more formal in addressing than the Austrians, while the Germans are perceived as more relaxed:

- (11) [Switzerland:] *viel korrekter*
'much more correct' (Vienna, FG1, orthoptist, f, 32)
- (12) *in Deutschland schneller mit dem Du*
'quicker with *du* in Germany' (Vienna, FG1, technical writer, m, 38)

Austrians appear particularly sensitive to national differences in greetings:

- (13) [in other German speaking countries:] *Begrüßungs- und Verabschiedungsformeln sind anders*
'formulae for hello and good-bye are different' (Vienna, FG1 social worker, f, 30)

Greetings and their perceived agreement with address pronouns appear to be quite a salient feature of the German national variety for Austrians:

- (14) *In Deutschland sagen sie viel mehr du, sie fangen mit dem Du an, auch wenn sie sich nicht kennen. Sie sagen hallo und nicht grüß Gott, aber bei ihnen ist das Hallo ein Sie wahrscheinlich.*
'In Germany, they use *du* much more, they start with *du*, even if they don't know each other. They say *hallo* rather than *grüß Gott*, but with them, the *hallo* is a *Sie* [greeting] probably.' (Vienna, Q5, IT staff, m, 31)
- (15) *Die Anrede in Deutschland – sie sind noch lockerer. Sie sagen auch nicht meistens auf Wiedersehen, sie sagen nur tschüss. Tschüss hat schon für mich irgendwie per du.*
'Address in Germany – they are even more relaxed. They don't mostly say *auf Wiedersehen* either, they only say *tschüss*. For me, *tschüss* has something to do with *du*.' (Vienna, Q5, orthoptist, f, 32)

As a matter of fact, while *hallo* as an informal greeting can be combined with *Sie*, honorific and last name all over Germany, but is still much more frequently combined with *du* in Austria, *tschüss* can be equally used with *du* or *Sie* in northern and central Germany, while it is still a bit unusual to combine *tschüss* with *du* in southern Germany, and it is exclusively used with *du* in Austria, in analogy with other *du* specific Austrian good-bye greetings such as *servus* or *baba*. *Tschüss* used with a person the speaker is on *Sie* terms with is often seen as rude in Austria:

- (16) *Jedesmal wenn ich am in der Firma einen Geschäftspartner oder eine Geschäftspartnerin aus Deutschland am Apparat habe krieg ich einen dicken Hals wenn sich der Anrufer mit „Tschüs“ verabschiedet. Ich finde das sehr respektlos. In Wien kommt kein Mensch auf die Idee dieses schreckliche „Tschüs“ bei ihm unbekanntem Personen zu verwenden.*
'Every time I'm on the phone with a business partner from Germany in the office, it really gets my goat when the caller says *tschüss* when ringing off. I think that is a lack of respect. No one in Vienna would even think of using this

horrible *tschüss* with people they are not acquainted with.’ (M. Hanold; 29.09.2006 13:51 <http://derstandard.at/2603338?seite=1#forumstart>)

Not only use of address pronouns, but also the peripheral features of address, such as nominal address and greetings are different in the German and Austrian varieties of German. Ignorance of standards in the other national varieties can lead to intercultural misunderstandings. Or it can reinforce national stereotypes such as the one that the Austrian author Reinhard P. Gruber is playfully invoking in his tongue-in-cheek “dictionary of frowned-upon words for Austrians” from 2006, a long list of teutonisms he titled *Piefke-Wörterbuch*.⁹ In his introduction, Gruber confirms what our Austrian informants say about national differences in addressing and address specific greetings:

Deutsch ist eine lebendige Sprache. ‘Tschüss’, im Jahre 1955 in ganz Österreich unmöglich, ist heute flächendeckend da, gemeinsam mit ‘Tschau’. Der bekannteste deutsche TV-Talkmaster begrüßt dafür mit ‘Servus’ (ohne gekneisst zu haben, dass ‘Servus’ nur geht, wenn man per du ist!). [...] ‘Servus’ ist der österreichischste aller europäischen Grüße. Er ist rein lateinisch und wird zusehends als ‘Servas!’ ausgesprochen. Aber nur, wenn man per du ist. Und per du waren einander Österreicher und Piefke nie.

‘German is a living language. “Tschüss”, impossible anywhere in Austria in 1955, has become ubiquitous today, alongside “Ciao”. The best known German TV talk show host, on the other hand, greets with “Servus!” (while completely missing the point that “Servus” is only possible for people on *du* terms!). [...] “Servus” is the most Austrian of all European greetings. It is pure Latin and increasingly pronounced “Servas!”. However, it is only used between people on *du* terms. And Austrians and Piefkes have certainly never been on *du* terms.’ (Gruber 2006: 6-7)

4. Conclusions

While our informants in the three research sites situated in western Germany, eastern Germany and Austria respectively do not differ in their attitudes toward the choice of pronominal address in core situations with clear T or V address tendency, there are significant differences in the workplace domain. Austrians report using the T address much more with superiors, colleagues and clients than Germans, and east Germans even less than Germans from the western part of the country. Socio-historical reasons for these differences can be found in the memory of the forced use of socialist T address forms within the public register of the former GDR and the mutual upper class T of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy respectively. In Austria, this historical reason also extends to the high frequency of title use and the fact that title and T address are not mutually exclusive there, while they are in Germany.

As opposed to the speakers of the dominant national standard of German in Germany, Austrian speakers of German tend to be more sensitive towards different national standards in address forms and related structures such as greetings. Such micropragmatic differences can lead to intercultural misunderstandings or reinforce mutual stereotypes between speakers of different national varieties of German.

⁹ *Piefke* being a derogatory term Austrians have for their German neighbours.

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HEINZ L. KRETZENBACHER is the convenor of the German Studies program at the University of Melbourne. Apart from pragmatics and sociolinguistics, his main research interests lie in academic communication and LSP research and in the theory and pedagogy of German as a foreign language. Address: German Studies Convenor, School of Languages and Linguistics, The University of Melbourne, VIC 3010, Australia. Email: heinz@unimelb.edu.au