

## NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES THROUGH PRONOUNS OF ADDRESS IN AN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This article investigates forms of address, in particular the T/V distinction in German, in conversational interviews with German-speaking immigrants to English-speaking Canada and their descendants. From among 77 interviews conducted in two urban areas in Canada, we discuss instances of both the interactional use of and metalinguistic comments on forms of address. Our analysis is largely guided by conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Goodwin & Heritage 1990). Using Clyne, Norrby and Warren's (2009) model of address as a backdrop, we investigate the construction of group identity and group socialization through the lens of positioning theory (e.g. van Langenhove and Harré 1993; Dailey-O'Cain and Liebscher 2009). This combination of analytical tools can explain shifts in both usage of and attitudes toward the T/V distinction that cannot be explained through language attrition arguments alone.

**Keywords:** Forms of address; T/V distinction; Du vs. Sie; Conversation analysis; Language attitudes; Interviews; German in Canada; Migration studies; North American migration.

### 1. Introduction

The study of forms of address has been a challenge to researchers at least since Brown and Gilman's (1960) seminal work on the T/V distinction. Their work established the theoretical framework for the distinction between the 'intimate/simple' pronoun T (cf. French *tu*), in German *du*, and the 'polite/distant' pronoun V (cf. French *vous* and Latin *vos*), in German *Sie*. They argued for 'direction of power' and 'degree of solidarity' as the major factors dominating T/V use, in conjunction with the symmetrical vs. asymmetrical use. Their work, while ground-breaking at the time, has now rightly received some criticism. Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) criticize Brown and Gilman's system for its rigidity and its purely cognitive focus, and argue instead for a more complex system based on markedness that includes at least the following additional factors: Rank, status, office, generation, formality, informality, public discourse, private discourse, intimacy, social distance, high degree of emotional excitement (132). Morford (1997) as well as Belz and Kinginger (2002) further challenge Brown and Gilman's system as too semantic and suggest Silverstein's "order of indexicality" (2003) instead. Clyne, Norrby and Warren (2009) point to the complexities but also the flexibilities of address usage by suggesting a model based on different contexts and a

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combination of certain scales, principles and factors, which will be further discussed below.

Language users seem to rely on a complex net of factors when it comes to deciding to address each other through forms such as T and V or avoiding the decision to use one or the other.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we add an additional factor to this mix, as our focus here is the use of forms of address among German-speaking immigrants in English-speaking Canada. To this end, we analyze a set of conversational interviews in terms of these immigrants' use of the *du* and *Sie* forms of address, as well as metacomments on them. As we will show, this usage, which differs sharply from the way these same pronouns are used in German-speaking Europe cannot be explained as a mere sign of language attrition, but reveals a strong link to the construction of group identity. Through their own norms of usage, German-Canadians may employ forms of address as a local practice in order to construct who is German-Canadian and who is not. From this perspective, choices between forms of address become a matter of positioning oneself and others as part of certain social groups.

With the recent exception of Clyne et al. (2009), influences such as identity, perceptions about local and global contexts, attitudes, and socialization patterns have largely gone unnoticed in previous work on forms of address. Yet in our data, we find all of these things to be relevant. In order to get at the crux of the differences between the use of forms of address in an immigrant community and forms of address in German-speaking Europe, this paper investigates these elements as the process of negotiating between the German pronouns *du* and *Sie*, and also looks at the immigrants' awareness of these differences and their illustrations of these through expressions of differing ideologies.

## 2. Forms of address in German

While the T/V distinction is common to many languages throughout the world, each language and each culture deals with that distinction in different ways. In German, forms of address include two elements: First and last names, and the system of pronoun use corresponding to T and V. To complicate matters, the second-person singular and plural V-pronouns (*Sie*) also correspond in phonetic form to non-address third person plural pronouns (*sie*), as reflected in table 1 below. Because this similarity presents a source of potential misunderstandings that may influence address choice in the data discussed here, we have included these additional forms in table 1 alongside the different forms of *du* and *Sie*.

	Singular	Plural
second person, (you, T-form)	du [du:]	ihr <sup>3</sup> [i:ə]
second person, (you, V-form)	Sie [zi:]	Sie [zi:]
third person (she and they)	sie (she) [zi:]	sie [zi:] or die [di:] (both they)

Table 1: Truncated German pronoun system

<sup>2</sup> For avoidance of address pronoun use in interviews, see Coveney (2003).

<sup>3</sup> This form (*ihr*) is also commonly used to a group comprising both individuals with whom the speaker is on T-terms as well as on V-terms (cf. Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 80).

Generally, it is found that the German T/V pronoun system of address allows speakers to both refer to an interlocutor and to define social relationships (Barron 2006; see also Besch 1998). One of the earlier models on German address was devised by Bayer (1979), who viewed the student unrest of the 1960s as pertinent for the development from a System 1 (S1) to a System 2 (S2) in West Germany.<sup>4</sup> Within S1, *du* and *Sie* are used in order to distinguish between intimacy and informality on the one hand; and formality, hierarchy, and respect on the other. Hence, the use of *Sie* in this system indicates a formal relationship, i.e. the unmarked form of address outside the family, while *du* indicates an intimate one, used only with family, close friends, and children under sixteen (cf. Schüpbach, Hajek, Warren, Clyne, Kretzenbacher & Norrby 2006; Delisle 1986). In S2, *du* is the unmarked form of address, going beyond the groups of S1 by not necessarily reflecting a close relationship between speaker and addressee but rather an agreement within a group (Delisle 1986). According to this view, the pronoun *du* is thus used as an expression of solidarity and group identity, signaling that interlocutors belong to the same group, share same interests and views. By contrast, the use of *Sie* labels non-members of the group by indicating non-solidarity and social distance (Bayer 1979).

Though Bayer's model, and Hickey's (2003) adaptation of it, address some of the issues such as the creation of group identity and respect through address choice, it does not hold against current realities. In fact, solidarity *du* among university students and academics post-1968 has decreased during the course of the 1970s (Schüpbach et al. 2006) and has been in primary use only among West German university students, trade union members, and in leisure activities (Kremer 2000; Bowers 1992). In East Germany, where the student movement had less of an impact, the solidarity *du* was not employed in the same way. Some recent studies using sociolinguistic (Kretzenbacher, Clyne & Schüpbach 2006; Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009) and ethnographic approaches (Winchatz 2001) provide a more detailed picture of the complex matter of address pronoun use in German. For example, Winchatz found several social meanings Germans expressed for the use of *Sie*: "age, adulthood, anger, arrogance, authority, closeness, coldness, conversableness, dignity, distance, frequency of contact, friendship, intimacy, isolation, knowing other, liking, personal, politeness, power, rejection, relationship, respect, solidarity, status" (2001: 346).

Clyne, Norrby and Warren (2009) challenge earlier understandings of the use of forms of address by basing their model on different *contexts* rather than different *systems*. They delineate three contexts: A relatively stable *du* context (family and close friends), a relatively stable *Sie* context (official interactions with strangers above a certain age) and a fuzzy-edged context. The last of these applies to situations in which the use of such pronouns is less fixed and needs to be negotiated. In these situations of first contact, the V-form is commonly used and the T-form is treated with caution, since V can quickly be changed to T in an interaction or introduced at some point agreeable to the interactants. However, a return from T to V is uncommon and may be a marker for a disturbed relationship.

Based on their analysis of German and Austrian focus group data, interviews and chats, Clyne et al. (2009) show that traditional social variables such as age and

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<sup>4</sup> In its impact on address use, the student movement is generally considered "an important turning point not only in Europe but also in the Americas and Asia" (Clyne, Norrby & Warren 2009: 1).

status are not sufficient to explain the choice between pronouns of address. While age and status do play some role, these "are not stable entities, and their relative importance is negotiated in the particular situation at hand" (ibid.: 79). The most salient variable for the choice between German pronouns of address is, according to Clyne et al, *sameness*, i.e. "expressing a common ground and a sense of common identity" (ibid.: 79).<sup>5</sup> This perceived commonality includes interests, attitudes, and group memberships, which arise more or less spontaneously in the situation at hand. Overall, Clyne et al.'s comparative model of address usage based on the analysis of German, French and Swedish<sup>6</sup> comprises three scales (grammatical resource, V-ness, and sameness), a set of principles (familiarity, maturity, relative age, membership, social identification, and accommodation) and several contextual factors such as the online context (pp. 156).

The majority of research on German pronouns of address has focused on German within the European context, which also includes research comparing German to other European languages (Bowers 1992; Clyne, Kretzenbacher, Norrby & Schüpbach 2006; Kremer 2000). For non-European contexts, however, there are only a few studies, including one on German language learners (Belz & Kinginger 2002). Two studies on forms of address among German-speaking immigrants abroad are Stoffel's (1983) research on German immigrants in New Zealand and Howell and Klassen's (1971) study on Mennonites. Stoffel (1983) argues that the prevalent use of first names among English speakers has caused German immigrants living in New Zealand to use *du* more widely. This pronoun is used not only in its intimate function indicating close personal relationships, but also for strangers or mere acquaintances. Stoffel concludes, therefore, that New Zealand Germans have developed certain independent perceptions of solidarity given by the common heritage language and the shared situation of immigration, leading them to use a solidarity *du*. Furthermore, Stoffel claims that both German natives living in New Zealand for more than 25 years and second-generation speakers of the language reveal the tendency of a restricted and rather inflexible address system, using almost exclusively one of either *du* or *Sie* and displaying difficulties in switching between forms of address when relationships change.

In their study, Howell and Klassen (1971) discovered two different patterns of pronominal usage of *du* and *Sie* within the same Mennonite speech community in Canada. They found a preference for a symmetrical pattern of address among immigrants from Gdansk, Poland (i.e. they typically used *Sie* among adults who were not family members or close friends, indicating relative solidarity) whereas immigrants from Ukraine tended to use an asymmetrical pattern (i.e. they used *Sie* in order to express differences in social rank). Howell and Klassen attributed the different *du/Sie* usage to the migration history of each group, leading to preservation of conservative sociolinguistic patterns in the isolated Ukrainian enclave and to acceptance of sociolinguistic changes within the Danzig group in German-speaking Prussia.

While the aforementioned two other immigrant-context studies (Howell & Klassen 1971; Stoffel 1983) rely mainly on questionnaires and observational data, in

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<sup>5</sup> Clyne et al. (2009) draw on Svennevig (1999) who shows that language use defining interpersonal relationships during first encounter interactions is based on the concepts of *solidarity*, *familiarity* (common ground), and (positive) *affect*.

<sup>6</sup> In Clyne et al. (2009), English is not part of the study per se but used as a reference point. It is noted that in the absence of a T/V distinction, English relies on other ways to index social distance, for example, as Bowers (1992) also observes "more through the content of what is said and the way in which it is communicated" (59).

this paper we instead use data taken from a large set of conversational interviews. This allows us to examine usage among a large number of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in a data context that comes quite close to that of everyday conversation. It also demands a different kind of method, however, which is different yet again from Clyne et al.'s (2009) study which focused on expressed perceptions and understandings rather than the negotiation of address terms in the interaction itself. Despite their different methodological approaches, however, these other studies discussed here do provide important background to our analysis.

### **3. Data, method of analysis, and theoretical underpinnings**

The data we analyze here stems from a larger project about language use and identity in German-speaking Canada.<sup>7</sup> In this project, two native German-speaking research assistants audiotaped 77 conversational interviews with speakers from the German diaspora, including both German-speaking immigrants and their descendants. These interviews took place in two Canadian cities - Edmonton in western Canada and Kitchener-Waterloo in central Canada - and were conducted in 2007 and 2008. Both cities are primarily English-speaking, which means that just as in New Zealand, German immigrants in these parts of Canada find themselves in a minority language situation in which the majority language is English (i.e. a language lacking in a T/V distinction). Both interviewers were female Ph.D. students in their twenties, and both were native speakers of German who had come to Canada for their studies within the four years prior to the start of the project and who also exhibited great facility with the use of English. The language choice in the interviews varied from near-exclusive use of German to near-exclusive use of English, but among the second-generation speakers (13 in Edmonton and 12 in Waterloo), the two languages were approximately evenly distributed between the two cities,<sup>8</sup> suggesting that this can not be explained merely by the influence from the two different interviewers.

From among the 77 one to two hour-long interviews with immigrants of German-speaking background, we selected passages of talk for analysis in which the T/V distinction was made relevant by one or more of the speakers, either through usage or through metalinguistic comments. These passages were then analyzed drawing on conversation analysis (e.g. Goodwin & Heritage 1990) and interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Gumperz 1982). In addition, we asked both interviewers some questions for reflection. These questions consisted of issues such as what factors they take into account when negotiating T/V use, how many of the people they interviewed they had been acquainted with beforehand, where and how they recalled T/V use to have been negotiated, whether T/V use was part of the directions they received from the main researchers regarding how they should carry out the interview, whether it was natural for them to use T/V in the way they did or whether they can remember examples in which it was unusual and whether they would ever use T/V the same way in Germany,

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<sup>8</sup> In Waterloo, four participants from the second generation spoke German with some English, two spoke both, and six spoke English almost exclusively, and in Edmonton, four spoke German with some English, and nine spoke English almost exclusively.

whether *Sie* plus first name would have been a possibility for them as interviewers, and whether they see the use of *Sie* as inherently wrapped up with social distance. The excerpts used in this paper were also played back to the interviewers to elicit further observations and comments; insights which we gratefully incorporated into the analysis.

While evidence of language attrition can certainly be found in some of our examples, this is not our focus in this paper. Rather, the interactional analysis on which this paper is based points us in a rather different direction and provides us with insights into the *social* influences on the choice between pronouns of address in German-speaking Canada. According to Clyne et al. (2009), the study of address choice needs to include the interactants' "shared assumptions about what is appropriate behaviour in the situation at hand, based on their knowledge about the world, their partly shared histories and cultural experiences" (25). Through our analysis, we attempt to show the link between these interactional practices of address and underlying assumptions or *ideologies* (Blommaert 2005), including expressions of language attitudes (cf. Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain 2009; Soukup 2009).

Since ideologies are culturally and locally specific, the German-Canadian context provides a frame in which address choice may assume its own meanings. An interactional analysis may reveal these meanings, which then links up with certain *positions*. According to Carbaugh (1996), "each discursive practice simultaneously *positions*, within sociocultural discourses, its producer as well as the recipients of those messages. The focus on the communicative practice of *positioning* helps draw attention to these interactive dynamics." (143) Address usage is then also a practice of *positioning*, which is a process by which interactants make their orientations toward social categories relevant (Harré and van Langenhove 1991; van Langenhove and Harré 1993). In this regard, positioning can be seen as a way to construct social and cultural identity (Carbaugh 1996). We view positioning as "a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role" (Harré and van Langenhove 1991: 393), because these expressed orientations are not permanent, but highly context-dependent, and can even change from one moment to the next for a single individual.

Our study can also be located within the context of the study of politeness, in particular with regard to Watts' (2003) notion of politeness as locally determined in the interaction. In line with other researchers, Watts criticizes the reliance on earlier models with relatively fixed notions of politeness (e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987) when analyzing actual conversational data. In reference to politeness research as one major area to which the study of address usage belongs, Clyne et al. (2009) argue for a model, in which "politeness is not seen as a pre-existing, static concept or list of strategies but as something which is discursively constructed by interlocutors" (ibid: 25).

The following presentation of the analysis is split in two main parts. The first of these presents data excerpts in which preferences of address choice emerge through demonstrated problems in usage and negotiation of address term choice with the interviewers, and the second comprises data excerpts which contain metacomments about address choice. The perceptions, attitudes and assumptions voiced by the participants in these latter excerpts provide further background about German address choice in Canada and in Europe. In addition, this second section sheds light on the interactional analysis of the first part in important ways.

#### 4. Analysis

##### 4.1. T/V use in the interviews: Preferences, misunderstandings and interchangeable use

The first general observation analyzing the data is that the Waterloo-based interviewer (IntW in the transcripts) primarily used *Sie* while the Edmonton-based interviewer (IntE) primarily used *du*. One possible explanation for this is that the Waterloo participants tended to be older than the Edmonton participants, which may have prompted the German interviewer to use *Sie*.<sup>9</sup> An additional explanation involves the recruitment of participants, which was slightly different between the two cities. In Waterloo, almost all participants answered a call for participation issued through an article in a local newspaper. In Edmonton, after the same newspaper ad attracted little response, the “friend of a friend” technique (e.g. Milroy 1980) was employed, which may have resulted in a perception of trust and familiarity transferred onto the interaction with the interviewer and reflected, in parts, in the use of *du*. In both cases, it is important to recognize that since T/V use is usually negotiated between strangers upon first contact, the interviewers may have had this initial negotiation via e-mail or telephone preceding the interviews. In fact, both interviewers pointed this out in their requested reflections. However, if indeed there was negotiation of T/V use prior to the interviews, it certainly did not end there, which is evidenced by the following first section of the analysis.

The first excerpt, in which the Waterloo-based interviewer and interviewee Ira negotiate T/V, occurs after the first half of this 50-minute interview. Ira is in her mid-fifties and is from the second generation of immigrants, since she was born in Canada two years after her parents immigrated in the late 1940s.

##### Excerpt 1a:<sup>10</sup> Request for use of *du*

- 01 IntW: wenn sie überlegen, wie sie als KIND deutsch gesprochen haben  
*when you think about how you spoke german as a CHILD*  
 02 und wie sie HEUTE deutsch sprechen,  
*and how you speak German NOW,*  
 03 Ira: yeah  
 04 IntW: ehm gibt es unterschiede und wenn ja (.) ehm (.) was für unterschiede sind das?  
*uhm are there differences and if yes (.) um (.) what kind of differences are they?*  
 05 Ira: ((laughs))  
 06 IntW: ((laughs)) verstehen sie mich, [wenn ich das sage? ((smiling voice))  
 ((laughs)) *do you understand me when I say that?*

<sup>9</sup> The Waterloo interviewer says of herself that age is the first deciding factor for her, followed by familiarity.

<sup>10</sup> Pseudonyms are used instead of original names and any other identifying information has been changed. Transcription conventions are as follows: German and English utterances are in normal type and English translations (where necessary) are in *italics* directly beneath in. The transcript differs from usual orthographic spelling, e.g. CAPITALISATION in the transcript is used to mark intensity. This also means that the usual spelling of *Sie* for the V-form of you and *sie* for the T-form of you is not rendered in the transcripts. In this way, ambiguities can be retained in them. Rising intonation is indicated with a question mark? and falling intonation is indicated with a period. Unclear passages are marked with (single brackets) and =equals signs= are used to indicate immediate latches between utterances by different speakers. Conversational overlap is indicated with [square brackets]. Pauses lasting a beat (.) or two (..) are indicated as shown; longer pauses are indicated in seconds.

- 07 Ira: [oh yeah yeah but you know what (.)  
 08 YOU could talk DU to me I [would i would much prefer if you-  
 09 IntW: (((laughs)) ok ((smiling voice))  
 10 Ira: when you talk to me you say DU  
 11 IntW: ja ok. ((smiling voice))  
           *yeah ok. ((smiling voice))*  
 12 Ira: ehm (.) just (.) my german is a lot worse now  
 13 IntW: ja,  
           *yeah,*  
 14 Ira: oh:: and it was pu::re before when i was little, (.) no english in there,

Ira in line 08 explicitly requests the use of *du*. Since she is twice as old as the interviewer and a stranger, it would be quite unusual to use *du* considering the German T/V norms in Europe, which the interviewer is accustomed to. In contrast to these norms, Ira seems to be positioning herself as a member of the interviewer's own peer group. This may seem perplexing to the interviewer, evidence for which can be seen in the smiling voice she uses in responding to the request. In addition, it is unusual that in this interview situation Ira positions herself as someone who may make such a suggestion for the order of conduct, an act which has the effect of redefining the interview as a non-hierarchical interaction. While Ira requests the interviewer to say *du* to her, she herself avoids having to choose between *du* or *Sie* in addressing the interviewer by switching to English in line 07. In fact, at no point in the interview does Ira address the interviewer with either German *du* or *Sie*, which may indicate that she is uncomfortable with choosing either form of address. In line 12, she adds what seems, by way of sequential order, like another justification for her request: Her loss of German. However, it becomes obvious when Ira speaks German in the interview that she speaks German fairly well and that the use of *du* may have yet other reasons, some of which she explains in the following continuation of the example.

Excerpt 1b is from the same conversation, about twenty lines later, in which Ira talks about which language she uses with her aunt.

**Excerpt 1b: Elaboration on request for use of *du***

- 28 IntW: oder versuchen sie es auf deutsch.  
           *or you (V-form) try it in german*  
 29 Ira: oh no [(.) englisch  
           (. ) *english*  
 30 IntW: [nein (.) sagen sie's auf englisch (.) ja::  
           *no (.) you (V-form) say it in English (.) yes::*  
 (1.0)  
 31 IntW: ((smiling voice)) .hh mir fällt es schwer (.) z- zu IHNen (.) zu dir DU zu sagen.  
           ((smiling voice)) .hh *it's hard for me (.) t- to say DU to YOU (V-form) to you (T-form).*  
 32 Ira: OH  
 33 IntW: warum (.) warum möchtest du, dass ich DU sage?  
           *why (.) why do you (T-form) want me to say DU?*  
 34 Ira: weil wenn du SIE sagst (.) dann eh (.) number one i am not used to it (.) and  
           *because when you say SIE (.) then uh (.)*  
 35 number two (.) then i think of a plural a plural instead of-  
 36 IntW: oh::oh::.  
 37 Ira: singular. (.) yeah. so. if you can force yourself to say DU ((laughs))  
 38 IntW: ((laughs)) ok ich versuche.



- ((laughs)) *ok i'll try.*
- 39 Ira: *ok.*
- 40 IntW: *ja::, (1.0) ehm sie ham gesagt (.) jetzt sage ich schon wieder SIE ((laughs))  
yeah::, (1.0) um you (V-form) said (.) now I'm saying SIE again ((laughs))*
- 41 Ira: *oh is ok.*
- 42 IntW: *du hast gesagt, dass du nach deutschland zurück möchtest.  
you (T-form) said, that you want to go back to germany.*
- 43 Ira: *ja ja.  
yes yes.*
- 44 IntW: *mit dem mann (.) mit dem ehemann (.) ehm hast du einen bestimmten plan, was  
with the man (.) with your husband (.) um do you (T-form) have a particular  
plan for*
- 45 *du sehen möchtest (.) oder wen du besuchen möchtest?  
what you (T-form) want to see or who you (T-form) want to visit?*
- 46 Ira: *ehm (.) mein onkel und dann will ich die berge sehen, (.) schwarzwald  
um (.) my uncle and then i want to see the mountains, (.) the black forest*

The interviewer clearly has a preference for using *Sie* in this situation and is apprehensive using *du*, as expressed in line 31. Ira's use of the change of information discourse marker 'oh' (Schiffrin 1987) indicates that she is surprised about the interviewer's reluctance using *du*. In accommodating to Ira in using *du* in line 33, the interviewer adds the question why Ira prefers *du*. In her response in lines 34-35, Ira, switching to English, refers to her Canadian socialization (i.e. being used to *du*), and the potential for misunderstandings due to the same form, *Sie*, being used for singular and plural. By this, she is likely referring to the fact that the pronoun *sie* (written without a capital letter), and which translates into English as 'they', is pronounced the same as the V-form *Sie* (cf. table 1 above). In line 36, the interviewer reacts with 'oh:', which clearly marks that information as having been a previously unknown factor in the negotiation. This stated lack of foreknowledge on the interviewer's part may be the reason why Ira, in line 37, can be so insistent as to demand the use of *du*, though this demand is mitigated through laughter. Line 40 shows that the interviewer does not easily manage to use *du*, though she succeeds in line 42. It seems that establishing a common ground by Ira giving her explanation results in an easier use of *du* for the interviewer.

The explanation Ira gives contains practical concerns as reasons for choice of address: The way she is used to speaking and grammatical difficulties she experiences, possibly as a result of this socialization. The fact that she invites the interviewer to speak "her" norm, however, also demonstrates a certain kind of affection or creating familiarity, since she positions the interviewer as part of her group.

In addition to Ira, there are also other interviewees in the Waterloo corpus who indicate their difficulties with *Sie* usage. In excerpt 2, the interviewees are Ida and Udo, a married couple, both in their mid-seventies and, like Ira, second generation immigrants. Ida grew up with German, while Udo grew up with two languages: German and Ukrainian. Excerpt 2a, in which Udo talks about starting out as a church minister, occurs about halfway through the interview. Ida speaks mostly English and Udo mostly German.

#### Excerpt 2a: The T/V distinction in home German and school German

- 01 Udo: *so wie es ging in die gemeinde in in in äh winnipeg wenn ich meine erste  
just like it was in the congregation in in in uh winnipeg when i had my*

- 02 deutsche predigt gehabt habe. (.) da sagte dieser professor möchtest du hilfe  
haben?  
*first german sermon. (.) this professor said do you (T-form) want to have help?*
- 03 IntW: ((laughter)) ja.  
((laughter)) yeah.
- 04 Udo: und- und das war [klar. (.) ich- (.) das war nötig.  
and- and that was [clear (.) i- (.) that was necessary.
- 05 Ida: [see that. see that was- that was the DU thing <<ha>  
06 we we find it very difficult to to use the sie. du.<sup>11</sup>=WELL i didn't  
07 take i didn't take german at school. (.) there was- i didn't have the opportunity  
08 to take german at school so my german was what i learned at home.
- 09 IntW: ja.  
yeah.
- 10 Ida: so it too- it's what sounds right to me now. ((laughter)) not what is the  
11 the good grammar i don't know ((laughter)).

At the beginning of excerpt 2a, Udo recalls an episode where a professor in his Canadian community in Winnipeg at the time offered German help. In this imaginary dialogue, Udo lets the professor address him with the T-form, which would be striking in some German contexts, where a professor would always use the V-form in such a situation. Ida's interruption of Udo and her mention the 'DU thing' in response to Udo's use of *du* here seems to be a comment on this difference.

Ida then talks about her difficulty using the T/V distinction and ties this to the fact that she did not learn German at school but from her immigrant parents at home. She believes that her own norms using pronouns of address in German differ from the norms taught at school, and she contrasts her own way of using the language according to 'what sounds right' (line 08), while she relegates the 'good grammar' to the realm of school. She implicitly devalues her own norm system as 'bad grammar' rather than accepting it as simply a different system that has emerged within a different context, i.e. the German diaspora. In doing so, she positions herself and the interviewer as members of separate German-speaking communities, one of which has inherently more right than the other to control norms of usage. The conversation continues as follows:

#### Excerpt 2b: Clashing preferences

- 12 IntW: ja. so you for example (do you) have difficulties to say sie?  
13 also mich zum beispiel zu siezen?  
*so to say sie to me for example?*
- 14 Ida: hm=hm. [hm=hm.  
15 IntW: [fällt ihnen das schwer?  
*is that hard for you (V-form)?*
- 16 Ida: ja.  
yes.
- 17 IntW: ist es leichter für sie du zu mir zu sagen?  
*is it easier for you (V-form) to say du to me?*
- 18 Ida: ja. [ja.  
yes. yes.
- 19 IntW: [a:h. ok. weil sie nie ähm jemanden gesiezt haben.  
*a:h. ok. because you (V-form) have never uh said sie to anyone.*

<sup>11</sup> It is unclear from the recording whether this is a repair or a use of 'du' to mean 'form'.

In the continuation of this example, Ida states her difficulties with *Sie* and possibly her preference for *du* with the interviewer (with whom they have been using *Sie* when talking German).

In this excerpt, the interviewer rephrases the question about the difficulty with *du* a few times, possibly because she wasn't sure whether Ida and Udo understand the expression 'siesen' (a verb denoting the use of the V-form). The interviewer recalls that she did not mean the question in line 17 as an offer to switch to *du* but rather as a clarification question. This can also be seen in the choice of wording: The indicative 'is it easier...' instead of the conditional 'would it be easier...'.<sup>12</sup> In looking for reasons for their preference, the interviewer suggests in line 19 that they are not used to *Sie*, to which Ida and Udo respond in excerpt 2c:

**Excerpt 2c: Past and present norms and pronoun reference misunderstandings**

- 20 Ida: because it was- ja. it's not-  
yeah.
- 21 IntW: hm=hm.
- 22 Ida: ja:. and uh although- (.) uh tante (.) tante heidi and tante uh lauterbach.  
aunt (.) aunt heidi and aunt uh lauterbach
- 23 Udo: ja.
- 24 Ida: they used to (.) sie their mother.  
use you (V-form)
- 25 IntW: hm=hm. in earlier times. [ja.  
yeah.
- 26 Udo: [oh ja.  
oh yeah.
- 27 Ida: [ja. ja.  
yeah. yeah.
- 28 Udo: see. but this doesn't happen any more
- 29 Ida: but see- we didn't use that at home

Ida and Udo provide an example here of the use of *Sie*, not from themselves, but from their extended family. This example shows that while the interviewer's pronoun *Sie* in line 19 may have been meant purely as a plural form of address to refer to Ida and Udo, the interviewees also understand it to mean the third person 'they', a source of confusion also mentioned by Ira in excerpt 1b. Ida provides the example of their aunts using *Sie* to address their mothers, which was common in the Ukraine (cf. Howell & Klassen 1971), i.e. the place where Udo's family is originally from. Thus, they relegate the use of *Sie* to the past. Udo then takes the issue back to himself and his family who did not use the V-form with each other, which indicates that the interviewees are, in fact, used to *du*.

In the end, the interviewer still does not offer the use of *du* but instead continues with *Sie*, thereby positioning herself as interviewer and cultural expert and controlling the norms of use (cf. Winchitz 2006: 92). In contrast to Ira in excerpt 1, the interviewees here do not initiate nor directly request a switch. A further difference to excerpt 1 is that Ida and Udo do not provide an explanation as to why they prefer or need to be addressed with *du*. There is no common ground established here, which would allow for further negotiation of address choice. Rather, both parties may have

<sup>12</sup> The interviewer recalls that the possibility to change to *du* did not occur to her because the interviewees were much older. It would be disrespectful for her to say *du* to them.

assumptions about address usage that are not shared here. This may include the concern over who would initiate the switch from *Sie* to *du* at this point: Should it be the interviewer (who may be considered the expert) or should it be Ida and Udo? The interviewer recalls that it would have felt impolite to her to initiate a switch to *du* with this older couple. There is no further negotiation of a switch here, nor does one happen later in the interview. Ida and Udo simply submit to the interviewer's preference.

It is likely not a coincidence that the preference for *du* in the first two examples comes from second-generation immigrant speakers, since they were raised in Canada and have their socialization into the German language primarily within their families, where the use of *du* is always prevalent. In addition, their contact with current-day German and German-speaking countries is less than that of the first generation, whose speakers never express discomfort with *Sie*. In fact, they may even use *Sie* with the interviewer as in excerpt 3 with Judi, a first-generation immigrant who came to Canada in the 1950s. Like the above two excerpts, the following one is also from the Waterloo corpus.

**Excerpt 3: Effortless use of *Sie* among a first-generation immigrant**

- 01 Judi:           soll ich sagen mein name ist judi werner  
                       *should i say my name is judi werner*  
 02 IntW:       ja ja da- das wissen wir (.) dann (.)  
                       *yeah yeah w- we know that (.) then (.)*  
 03 Judi:       wissen sie schon  
                       *you (V-form) know that already*  
 04 IntW:       das bekommt dann eine nummer ja und dann wird das ersichtlich  
                       *that gets a number then yeah and then it becomes clear*

Judi uses *Sie* here at the very beginning of the interview and confidently in this context, to a person whom she does not know very well. Her use of *Sie* corresponds with current-day German norms, which she seems familiar with, whether as a result of her own socialization within Germany prior to her immigration or the fact that she goes on yearly trips there.

While first-generation immigrants such as Judi do not tend to misunderstand the use of the T/V distinction, it is much more frequent among the second generation. The first example of this kind is also from the Waterloo corpus. The interviewee Till is a second-generation immigrant in his early seventies.

**Excerpt 4a: Misunderstanding of *Sie* and clarification with *du***

- 01 IntW:       sie haben gesagt dass ihre frau noch freunde in deutschland hat  
                       *you (V-form) said that your (V-form) wife still has friends in germany*  
 02               und dass sie da manchmal noch kontakt haben.  
                       *and that you (V-form) still have contact there sometimes.*  
 03 Till:       oh ja.  
                       *oh yeah.*  
 04 IntW:       wieviel wieviel ehm (.) gibt es denn situationen heute noch  
                       *how many how many um (.) are there still situations today*  
 05               in denen sie wirklich auch deutsch sprechen, also sie selber?  
                       *in which you (V-form) really still speak german, i mean you yourself (V-form)?*  
 06       (1.0)  
 07 Till:       when you say sie are you talking about just me?  
 08 IntW:       ja du ((laughs))

09 Till: *yeah you (T-form) ((laughs))*  
 ((laughs)) ehm ((clears throat))

In line 07, Till admits that he is confused about the interviewer's use of *Sie/sie* in this stretch of talk. In his question, he describes the problem as one about the distinction between singular ('just me?'), i.e. the second-person address pronoun *Sie* ('you'), or the third-person plural pronoun *sie* ('they'). The confusion seems to arise when the interviewer mentions a group of friends in line 01 who would be referred to by *sie* ('they'). When the interviewer uses *Sie* in lines 02 and 05, however, she means these as V address forms in the second person singular. The interviewer even preemptively disambiguates the *Sie* in line 05 by adding 'you yourself', possibly because of Till's gestural cues of misunderstanding or because she anticipates Till's difficulties. In order to disambiguate *sie/Sie* for Till in response to his question in line 07, the interviewer confirms the singular use by momentarily switching to *du*, a switch that is marked by laughter. Through this laughter, she marks the use of *du* as an exception in address form for her, since she would normally use *Sie*. Here, she has no other choice because both English *you* and German *Sie* would be ambiguous. The laughter also marks a departure from her position as the interviewer, and instead positions her as a sort of teacher.

A brief moment later in the same interview, a similar misunderstanding occurs.

**Excerpt 4b: Confusion about the referent for *Sie***

- 33 IntW: ja ehm was mich noch interessiert hatte, als wir über die eh deutschen freunde  
*yeah um what was interesting to me, when we talked about the uh*  
 34 gesprochen haben. ehm (.) verstehen sie die gut oder sprechen die teilweise auch  
*German friends. uhm (.) do you (V-form) understand them well or do some of them also*  
 35 dialekte [oder oder sachen die schwer zu [verstehen sind?  
*speak dialects or or things that are hard to understand?*  
 36 Till: [oh no no (.) [all of these friends are are  
 37 are teachers who taught in the german system.  
 38 IntW: [achso  
*oh*  
 39 Till: [their- their german is (.) wunderbar ((laughs))  
*wonderful*  
 40 IntW: ((laughs)) wunderbar ja ja. (.) das heißt also als deutsche dialekte kennen sie sozusagen  
 ((laughs)) *wonderful yeah (.) so that means in terms of german dialects you (V-form)*  
 41 hauptsächlich die dialekte ihrer eltern oder kennen sie auch noch andere dialekte?  
*primarily know about the dialects of your (V-form) parents or do you (V-form) know*  
*about other dialects too*  
 42 Till: the german friends or [I ?  
 43 IntW: [no you.  
 44 Till: ja [the the sie part is is can be confusing. ((laughs))  
 45 IntW: [so- sie ((laughs)) (.) ja.  
*so- you (V-form) ((laughs)) (.) yes.*  
 46 Till: any german i hear i understand

The misunderstanding becomes obvious in line 42, when Till is searching for the referent for *Sie* from lines 40 and 41,<sup>13</sup> which the interviewer disambiguates through 'no

<sup>13</sup> While the question in line 42 is phrased as a misunderstanding problem, Till may also mockingly reprimand the interviewer to use language that is easier for him to understand.

you' in the next line. In contrast to excerpt 4a above, she avoids the uncomfortable German *du* by using the English pronoun 'you', which is not ambivalent here because the differentiation is between 'they' and 'you' rather than 'you' (sg.) and 'you' (pl.). The misunderstanding again seems to arise from the potential to refer to the friends they are both talking about with the third person plural pronoun *sie* ('they'). However, when the interviewer mentions German friends, she uses the interchangeable demonstrative pronoun *die* in place of the personal pronoun *sie* in lines 34 and 35 as pronoun referring to these friends, possibly to differentiate from the *Sie* form of address.

Till certainly expresses not only his confusion, but also his discomfort with the use of *Sie*. It is notable, however, that despite his obvious dispreference for *Sie* as a pronoun of address, he never explicitly requests the interviewer to begin using *du* to him, the closest he comes being the labeling of the interviewer's *Sie* use as confusing in line 44. He seems to be aware that a man his age cannot easily make such a request in the European German context, which positions him as someone with at least passing familiarity with the norms for such usage in Germany.

In stark contrast with the European German norm, some interviewees use *du* and *Sie* interchangeably in the same interaction. Following is an example, though there are several other cases in the data. The interviewee is a woman in her fifties who immigrated to Canada as a child. She uses a T-form in excerpt 5a and V-forms in excerpts 5b and 5c below.

**Excerpt 5a: Use of *du***

- 01 Hanna: das war zur zeit noch immer, obwohl da viele emigranten war (.) es war (.) man  
*at that time that was still, even though there were a lot of immigrants (.) it was*  
 (.)  
 02 man das praktisch gar nicht ange- an- eh nicht (.) recognized it, weißt du?  
*they practically didn't reco- re- uh didn't (.) you know? (T-form)*  
 03 IntW: hhm.  
 04 Hanna: eh und da sachte man dann einfach, weil das das passiert hier  
*uh and then they just said, because that that happens here*

In line 02, Hanna uses the German equivalent of the English discourse marker 'you know': 'weißt du'. In a V context like this one, speakers commonly employ a phonetic reduction to 'weißte', which "increases the acceptability of a T form ... used in a V context" (Hickey 2003: 416). Hanna, however, uses the form without phonetic reduction, which increases the saliency of the T-form. Neither the interviewer nor Hanna, however, seem to take issue with this address form. Later, Hanna uses the *Sie* form to address the same interviewer three times during the interview. Two of these are in excerpts 5b and 5c below.

**Excerpt 5b: Use of *Sie***

- 55 Hanna: ich mein, sie müssen bedenken zur zeit, da nahm jeder, ich mein das war eh  
*i mean, you (V-form) have to consider at that time, everybody took, i mean it*  
*was*  
 56 weißbrot und das war en weißbrot, was man heute kaum kaum noch bekommt,  
*all white bread anyway and it was a white bread that can hardly be bought*  
*anymore*

**Excerpt 5c: Use of *Sie***

- 120 Hanna: so (.) so das (.) bis da eh also wissen se, wenn man klein is, also ich denk jetzt

- so (.) so that (.) until then uh you know (V-form), when you're little, i mean the first  
 121 in ersten paar jahren, das war schwierig.  
 couple of years now, that was difficult.

In excerpt 5b, the V-form is used as part of a regular verb construction. In excerpt 5c, the V-form is part of a discourse marker with a phonetic reduction: 'wissen se' ('you know'). Again, neither Hanna nor the interviewer comment on these V forms, initiate repair, or show any other kind of attention towards them. The T and V-forms are used side-by-side in this interview and are not marked in any way as unusual. While the T-form in excerpt 5a may be seen as a slip of the tongue, it is also possible that Hanna is attending to two different situations: The interview context requiring the V-form and a conversation within the German-Canadian context allowing the T-form. An argument for the latter is the fact that the T-form in excerpt 5a appears after a code-switch into English, which may trigger the Canadian context.

The excerpts in this section have been presented in order to provide evidence that there is a preference for T among the second generation and 1.5 generation<sup>14</sup> interviewees.<sup>15</sup> The excerpts showed that misunderstandings arose from the interviewer's use of *Sie*, especially with regard to anaphoric reference. In fact, these misunderstandings were given by the interviewees as reasons for a *du* preference, alongside the notion of being 'used to' *du* from speaking German with German-speaking family members. An appeal to a simple attrition argument alone cannot explain these phenomena, however, as the *du* verb form is, in fact, the more complex grammatical form. While the *Sie* pronoun simply uses the infinitive form of each verb, the *du* form is always conjugated further, and occasionally with additional stem changes not required by the *Sie* pronoun. A far more likely explanation stems from the fact that the interviewees more commonly speak German with friends and family (where the *du* form would be common in German-speaking Europe) rather than with strangers (where the *Sie* form would be common in German-speaking Europe).

The excerpts in this first section also showed that the T-form then becomes a way of positioning as a German-Canadian speaker. Excerpt 1 in particular showed that the interviewer was invited to use the T-form after common ground was established, i.e. after the interviewee had connected more with the interviewer in terms of familiarity. In other words, while the T-form may be more common resulting from socialization, it may also be experienced by its users as a way of positioning themselves as part of this community. The discussion in the following section seems to support this claim, also showing that the V-form may be dispreferred but not lost, and that these German-Canadians are aware of its use in other contexts, i.e. in Germany.

#### 4.2. Awareness of cross-Atlantic differences in T/V-use

The first section focused on T and V negotiation between interviewer and interviewees. This second section comprises interviewees' brief narratives and metacomments about

<sup>14</sup> Hanna in example 5 is of 1.5 generation because she immigrated to Canada as a child, i.e. received her main socialization in Canada just as the second generation speakers, who were born in Canada to German-speaking parents.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Stoffel's (1983) analysis of Germans in New Zealand for a similar argument.

address use in Canada and in Europe. One such example could be found already in 2a above, in which the interviewee recalled a conversation with a professor using the T-form. Examples such as this one are not necessarily evidence of the inability of the speaker to use the V-form, however, which an attrition argument would point to. In the following excerpts, in which at least some German speakers in Canada display awareness of different norms of use for pronouns of address in Europe, there seems instead to be an indication that the T-form has become the norm resulting from ease of use through socialization. We also argue that this new norm has resulted in a community marker for German-speaking immigrants in Canada to find commonality in the immigrant situation (cf. Stoffel 1983: 190).

In the following interview, Judi, the same interviewee as in excerpts 3, tells about a clash between German norms in Canada and in Germany when Judi's son as a young man raised in Canada in a German-speaking family is working in Germany in a bar.

**Excerpt 6: German-Canadian using a different T/V system in Germany**

- 01 Judi: und also er hat dann gelernt so ein bisschen (.) wir waren in hamburg  
*and so he learned a little bit then (.) we were in hamburg*
- 02 bei seiner tante (.) die hatte ne bar (.) und er war ein großer junge ja?  
*at his aunt's place (.) she had a bar (.) and he was a big boy yeah?*
- 03 für sein alter er war dann – wurde dann dreizehn und (.) ähm hatte  
*for his age he was – turned thirteen then and (.) um had*
- 04 deutsch gelernt ein bisschen und steht in der bar hinter der theke und  
*learned german a little bit and stands behind the bar and it's – kind*
- 05 da ist – son stammlokal ja? in hamburg da ist eine dame und die  
*of a local hangout eh? in hamburg there's a lady and she wants to*
- 06 möchte was haben und er zu ihr (.) was willst du denn haben (.) und  
*have something and he says to her what do you (T-form) want to*
- 07 die sagt (.) du LAUSEbengel (.) wie sagst du du zu mir? aber das  
*have and she says (.) you (T-form) little BRAT (.) what's this saying*
- 08 versteht er nicht (.) er versteht ja nur was willst du denn haben  
*du to me? but he doesn't understand it (.) he only understands what*  
*do you (T-form) want to have*
- 09 IntW: aha ja ja  
*aha yeah yeah*
- 10 Judi: das hat er gelernt nich?  
*that's what he learned eh?*
- ... ((10 lines omitted))
- 20 IntW: und das obwohl er eigentlich mal fließend deutsch sprach nehm ich an  
*and it was like that even though he actually spoke fluent german i assume as a*
- 21 als kind [wenn sie sagen er hatte nur deutsch gesprochen?  
*Child when you say he only spoke german?*
- 22 Judi: [ja ja ja ja ja  
*yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah*

Judi's son, a second-generation immigrant, is reported here to have used the T-form inappropriately in a situation where German norms require the V-form. The example also shows, however, simply by the fact that she told the story in the first place, that Judi is knowledgeable about the German norms and that she is aware of the faux-pas of her son.



With the following excerpt we move into a series of examples in which interviewees not only recall but also comment on T/V-use. Dirk, who appears in excerpts 7a through 7c, immigrated to Canada in 2003. He talks about T/V-use within the context of his difficulties in going back and forth between cultures, and starts with an example from his work experience in Germany.

**Excerpt 7a:<sup>16</sup> Comparison between German and Canadian norms**

- 01 Dirk: zum beispiel hierarCHIE, (1.0) find ich n GANZ großer Unterschied (.)  
*for example HIErarchy (1.0) i think there's a HUGE difference (.)*  
 02 in deutschland (.) also ich hab für- (.) >na wie sagt man so?<  
*in germany (.) i mean i worked for (.) >hmm how do you say this?<*  
 03 ne public- PRivate abfallsentsorgungsgesellschaft gearbeitet, halt. (.)  
*a public- PRivate waste disposal company i guess. (.)*  
 04 und ehm wenn man jetzt da dem geschäftsführer im- sag ich jetzt mal  
*and um when they (meet) the manager now in- let's say*  
 05 im aufzug oder so (begegnet) dann is des so (.) ne (.) hallo herr sie und  
*in the elevator or something then it's all (.) a (.) hello mr. sie/you (V-form) and*  
 06 wie auch immer halt (.) weil hier is des ja- hier sprichst de mit deinem ceo –  
*whatever else you know (.) because here it's yeah- here you (T-form) talk to your*  
 07 s is n bisschen FLAcher (.)  
*ceo – it's a little bit FLATter (.)*  
 08 IntE: ja  
*yeah*  
 09 Dirk: ne? und da muss man sich dann auch (.) im gewissen maße  
*eh? and that's something you have to get used to (.) in certain*  
 10 wieder dran gewöhnen halt ne?  
*ways huh?*  
 11 IntE: ja des is auch was womit ich n bisschen schwierigkeiten hab so::  
*yeah and that's also the part i have a little bit of trouble with so::*  
 12 Dirk: ja:  
*yeah:*  
 13 IntE: die leute anzusprechen  
*to address people*  
 14 Dirk: SIE::, und [und  
*SIE::, and and*  
 15 IntE: [ja  
*yeah*

In comparing the German with the Canadian T/V-use in the work context, Dirk finds German forms of address more hierarchical and Canadians *flacher*, i.e. 'flatter'. He provides an example of addressing his former German boss with the V-form and last name (line 05), and compares it to the 'more level' way of addressing his Canadian boss (line 06) without specifying in more detail the forms of address there. It is striking that he talks about 'having to get used to' the German norms again after only living in Canada for five years, by which he positions himself strongly as part of the German-Canadian community rather than the community of Germans in Germany with their norms of T/V usage. In line 14, he presents his aversion for the German V-pronoun by

<sup>16</sup> Left out off the transcripts for reasons of space is most of the backchanneling by the interviewer during Dirk's turn.

stressing *Sie* with an elongated vowel. Then he presents another example of pronoun use in excerpt 7b, when he talks about meeting a German couple on a ski lift in Canada.

**Excerpt 7b: Comparison between German and Canadian norms**

- 16 Dirk: ja zum beispiel ich hab- des is ja total- ich war letztens ehm (.) über weihnachten  
*yeah for example i have- this is completely- recently i was um (.) over christmas*  
 17 war n wir ski fahren, (.) und dann warn wir in lake louise (.) und da ham wa- ehm  
*we went skiing, (.) and then we were in lake louise (.) and we we- um*  
 18 da hab ich- da bin ich da so'n so'n GONdel hochgefahrn, und neben mir warn so n  
*i- i took one of those gondolas up the mountain, and beside me there was this*  
 19 deutsches paar halt, ne? und ich hab gesehn oder ich hab gehört dass die deutsch  
*german couple, you know? and i saw or i heard that they spoke*  
 20 sprechen (.) und äh hab dann auch was auf deutsch hallo wie geht's? ne? und also  
*german (.) and uh then i also said something in german hey how are you? eh? and*  
 21 die ham mich die ganze zeit gesiezt (.) ne, und ich hab immer halt DU gesagt ne,  
*so they spent the whole time saying sie to me (.) eh, and i always said DU eh,*  
 22 was machst du denn beruflich, weil weil des is halt n teil der englischen sprache(.)  
*what do you (T-form) do for a living, because because it's just part of the english*  
 23 der sich jetzt so n bisschen so auch ins deutsche äh äh während die sich für die war des  
*language which goes a little bit into the german uh uh while they for them it was a*  
 24 n bisschen unwohl/ glaub ich und die ham mich immer weiter gesiezt,  
*little weird/ i think and they kept saying sie to me*  
 25 °obwohl die warn NETT und alles° aber es war halt für sie:  
*°although they were nice and everything° but for the:m it was*  
 26 IntE: es is halt keine bekanntschaft s is halt nur-  
*it's not someone you know it's just a-*  
 27 Dirk: JA ja genau, und des äh des passiert jetzt dann häufiger im deutschen, (.) weil mein  
*YEAH yes exactly, and this uh this happens a lot in german, (.) because my my*  
 28 mein äh wenn ich jetzt DEUtsch spreche dann tendier ich auch immer mehr zum DU als  
*i mean uh when i speak GERman now i also tend more toward the DU than*  
 29 als zum SIE  
*toward the SIE*

In line 21, Dirk talks about the asymmetrical address pronoun use between himself and the German couple, with him using the T-form and the couple using the V-form. He clearly shows his preference for the T-form and suggests that this is 'part of the English language' which he transfers to German (lines 22-23). While he implies that the couple may have been uncomfortable using the T-form with him (line 24), he is quick to point out that they were 'nice people' (line 25) indicating that their use of the V-form did not seem to be connected to an animosity to him. In line 26, the interviewer suggests that it may be the level of familiarity (acquaintance), which, since low for the couple, made them use the V-form, with which Dirk agrees. The excerpt ends with the general observation by Dirk that he tends to use the T-form more than he did prior to his immigration. It is striking that this is phrased as a general change, rather than differentiating between different ways he might use the pronouns in Germany and in Canada.

In the continuation of this interview, both the interviewer and Dirk reflect on their use of address forms and Dirk makes some insightful observations about German norms in Canada.

**Excerpt 7c: Comparison between German and Canadian norms**

- 30 IntE: ja. ich war auch froh dass DU: mich geduzt hast in der email weil dann wusst ich  
*yeah. i was also glad that YOU: (T-form) said du to me in the email because then i new*  
 31 wie ich antworten kann.  
*how i could respond.*  
 32 Dirk: okay (.) ja für dich fällt das jetzt vielleicht nich- also für mich is es- ja,- komisch ne?  
*okay (.) yeah you (T-form) may not no- but for me it's- yeah- weird eh?*  
 33 es is wi- wi- wirklich sehr sehr sehr sehr komisch  
*it's re- re- really very very very very weird*  
 34 IntE: aber ich merk des auch dass ich eigentlich auch mit äh deutschen hier mehr des du  
*but i notice it too that i actually also use the du more here with the germans here*  
 35 Dirk: ja  
*yeah*  
 36 IntE: verwende als ich es in deutschland machen würde (.) also jetzt grad auch  
*than i would do it in germany (.) i mean just now also*  
 37 hier mit den leuten die ich hier so treffe,  
*here with the people who i meet here,*  
 38 Dirk: ja aber des hat- des könnt vielleicht auch damit zu tun haben dass man sich halt  
*yeah but that has- maybe that has to do with the fact that we see ourselves*  
 39 irgendwo als so ne gemeinschaft sieht- also dass es – wir sind jetzt alle irgendwie hier  
*at some point as kind of a community- i mean that it – we're all kind of here*  
 40 von deutschland (.) und damit sind wir auch n bisschen ENGe:r (.) und dieser ganze  
*from germany and because of that we're also a bit CLOSer and this whole*  
 41 sie quatsch muss da jetzt nicht mehr sein (.) halt ne (.)?  
*you (V-form) nonsense doesn't have to be like that anymore eh?*

In reflecting about his own preference for T-use, Dirk states that he finds it 'very weird' (line 33). He reinforces this statement by repeating 'very' several times, which expresses personal disbelief, possibly about the fact that he has developed this aversion to the V-form so quickly. When the interviewer tells that she also uses the T-form more often in Canada than in Germany and also more easily with people she does not know well, Dirk makes an insightful comment (ll. 38-41): He perceives Germans in Canada as a close-knit community and finds the V-form superfluous for such a community. In referring to the V-norms as 'this whole sie nonsense', he expresses a strong attitude rejecting the V-form in favour of the T-form in the Canadian context, and again positions himself as a part of that context.

The speakers in example 8 below, which is the continuation of excerpt 2c, express a similar attitude. Ida and Udo here talk about forms of address use by their cousin Heidi in Germany.

#### Excerpt 8a: Comparison between German and Canadian norms

- 01 Udo: but your (.) cousin still uses it. (.) Heidi. Heidi [still uses sie for all-  
 02 Ida: [oh yes. (.) for many people.  
 03 Udo: ja. for many people.  
 04 Ida: a even for their neighbours (.) and i find that very foreign (.) to me like  
 05 her neighbour has has been there for thirty years and they still (.) call each other  
 06 frau sowieso not- (.) they don't speak to one another by their first name  
 07 and i find that very very foreign. ((laugh[ter]))  
 08 IntW: (((laughter))) for me it's normal.  
 09 Ida: yes. i know. ((laughter)) i know. she said (.) aber so machen wir das  
*but that's how we do it*  
 10 in Deutschland [und

- in Germany and  
 11 IntW: [((laughter)) ja.  
 ((laughter)) yes.

Ida finds Heidi's use of the V-form and last names with her neighbors of 30 years 'foreign', by which she distances herself from the way of using the two pronouns in Germany and thereby from German language and culture as it is found in Germany. In contrast, the interviewer, who comes from Germany, finds it 'normal' (l. 08) through which she positions herself as someone who is following the German rather than the Canadian norms. Ida then demonstrates that she is well aware of these norms by quoting from a conversation with her cousin in lines 08-09. In this conversation, Ida presumably confronted her cousin about this address use, which tells us that this pronoun usage was worth for Ida and her cousin to have a conversation about.

Rather than simply viewing the two pronoun systems in Germany-German and German-Canadian as different, however, Ida then makes an explicit evaluation of it. As she further recalls from the reported conversation with her cousin:

**Excerpt 8b: Comparison between German and Canadian norms**

- 12 Ida: ich sag ihr seid so EINgebildet ((laugh[ter]))  
*i say you guys are so conCElTed ((laughter))*  
 13 IntW: [((laughter)) finden sie das eingebildet? ja?  
 ((laughter)) do you think it's conceited? yeah?  
 14 Ida: ja.  
 yeah.  
 15 IntW: diese diese distanz [die man me:rkt?  
*this this distance that you can fee:l?*  
 16 Ida: [yes. [yes.  
 17 Udo: [yes. ja. ja. you know it's a it's a difference of of culture.  
 18 Ida: [hm=hm.  
 19 IntW: [ja.  
 20 Udo: i mean the canadian culture is far [freer  
 21 Ida: [yes.

In line 12, Ida states that her cousin's use of the formal *Sie* makes her 'eingebildet' ('conceited').<sup>17</sup> Through the expression of this attitude, she portrays the Germany-German norm as negative, suggesting that despite her own lack of 'good grammar' (see excerpt 2a), she nonetheless prefers her own German-Canadian way of using the T/V-distinction. It becomes clear here that this preference is not just about sociolinguistic or pragmatic norms of pronoun use but much more than that. The T/V distinction is transferred to cultural differences, which in turn give rise to cultural stereotypes, as expressed by Udo in line 20.

A similar attitude is expressed in the following example, in which a general sense of formality is connected to V-form use. The excerpt is from the same interview as excerpt 4, i.e. with the interviewee Till, a second-generation immigrant in his early seventies. In this excerpt, he talks with the interviewer about his trip to Germany.

**Excerpt 9: Comparison between German and Canadian norms**

- 01 IntW: wie war das für sie in das land zu gehen, war das son bisschen wie

<sup>17</sup> See Winchitz (2001) for a similar expression of attitude: *Sie* use perceived as arrogant.

- 02            *what was it like for you (V-form) to go to the country, was it a little bit like*  
in eine art von heimat zu            [kommen oder wie (.) wie war das für sie?  
*coming to a kind of a            home or what (.) what was that like for you (V-form)?*
- 03 Till:            [yes yes it was like being at home in kitchener.  
... ((about 10 lines omitted))
- 04 Till: we felt (.) no difference whatsoever. (.) other than the germans are more formal.
- 05 IntW: more formal?
- 06 Till: oh yes
- 07 IntW: inwiefern ((laughs)) ?  
*in what way ((laughs)) ?*
- 08 Till: well because it's it's it's always a SIE situation for so long.

The differences in the systems for T/V-use among Germans in Europe as compared to Germans in Canada are here again transferred to the level of cultural differences: 'germans are more formal'. V-form use is therefore weighed more heavily than other aspects of the conversation in its ability to increase the formality level.

This aversion against V-form use, however, is not shared by everyone in the German-Canadian community, as the following example shows. The interviewee in excerpt 10 is Jana who is in her early seventies and who immigrated from Germany to Canada in the 1950s.

**Excerpt 10: Comparison between German and Canadian norms**

- 01 Jana: und auch (.) sehen sie. viele deutsche die hier rüber kamen. ich ich möchte nicht  
*and also (.) you see (V-form). a lot of germans that came over here. i i don't want to*
- 02 sagen dass ich besser war oder so was. die dachten (.) wenn sie (.) jetzt  
*say that i was better or something like that. they thought (.) when they (.) met*
- 03 jemanden trafen. sie könnten gleich duz- du sagen.  
*someone now. they could say du- du right away.*
- 04 IntW: ah so. hmhm  
*oh. hmhm*
- 05 Jana: das geht mir HEUTE noch gegen den strich. (.) you know. wenn ich jemanden  
*that STILL bugs me. (.) you know. when i don't know*
- 06 nicht kenne. you know. if i call you by your first name, and i speak  
*someone.*
- 07 english to you it's a different thing. you know. and that really really appalled me.

Jana here clearly differentiates between the German system of address, where she expects to be addressed with the V-form, and the English system where first name and *you* are appropriate. However, since she explicitly discusses the German system in the context of newcomers coming to Canada, she seems, in fact, to be drawing a boundary between long-term immigrants, with whom she may use T generally, and people who have just arrived from Germany, with whom she expects to be on V-terms.

This section showed that these first and second-generation German-speaking immigrants have an awareness about different T/V use in different cultural contexts. This awareness indicates that these speakers are *able* to use both forms, but that they choose not to.<sup>18</sup> Here, as in the first section of the analysis, there is evidence for a preference for T use in Canada, although newcomers and long-time German-speaking residents to Canada may be treated differently, as the last example seemed to indicate.

<sup>18</sup> This ultimately puts a question to attrition as the main factor of T use in this community.

In addition, the examples in this section revealed how differences in the use of forms in Canada and in Europe are tied to perceptions and stereotypes about the users of these forms.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis revealed a general preference for T use among the interviewees. Negotiation for T or V could be seen in particular with the Waterloo interviewer, whose preference for V use in this context seemed to clash with that of the interviewees. We could also observe difficulties with the V-forms resulting from phonetically similar forms for 'you' and 'they' in German especially among 1.5 and second generation immigrants. Despite a general preference for the T-form in the Canadian context, the data showed an awareness among the interviewees for differences between the Canadian and the European use of German address forms.

We argued that when looking for reasons for address choice in this immigrant context, we need to look beyond the idea of transfer from English *you* and an attrition argument, which would not explain, for example, why *du* rather than *Sie* is the unmarked and preferred form.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the use of *du* is grammatically more difficult in German since the verb agreement is more complex than with the use of *Sie*, which also suggests that there is more going on with the pronouns of address in German-speaking Canada than a simple shift toward English. Perceiving the German-speaking community as a community of practice means to account for the nature of the interactions shaping language use patterns in this community. As the misunderstanding excerpts showed, the preference for *du* was linked to practical concerns, namely the ease of understanding forms with which German speakers growing up in Canada are more familiar. The misunderstandings with *Sie* ('you', V-form) and *sie* ('they') mix-ups arising from the use of the V-form by the interviewer seems to point to unfamiliarity with this form. Since interactions in German are much more frequent among family members and friends rather than strangers in such a community, the T-forms seem to have become the unmarked forms within that community, especially among 1.5 and second-generation immigrants. Thus, one of the primary reasons for the preference for *du* within the German-speaking community in Canada may be socialization patterns (*du* use among family and community members, contexts in which German is most frequently used).

A second factor influencing address choice in the data analyzed here corresponds to Clyne et al.'s (2009) overarching principle of *sameness* as determining German address usage. Interactional negotiation as well as metacomments revealed a perceived commonality about who "belongs" to the German-speaking community and who does not as determining address choice. Thus, the contrast between European and Canadian norms expressed in the data seemed to indicate that the preference for *du* also seems to be a way of positioning oneself as a German-Canadian. When this commonality could not be assumed, as with the Waterloo interviewer who tried to be on V-terms, negotiation was often initiated to create this common ground. This may also explain why there was no negotiation with the Edmonton interviewer, who used *du*

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Clyne et al. (2009), who point out that English *you* corresponds to neither *du* nor *Sie* directly.

almost exclusively from the very beginning in her interviews. A German visitor, such as the Waterloo interviewer who as a doctoral student may be perceived as someone who is not necessarily planning to remain in Canada, may also be excluded from this T-community. Here, geographic place seem to have clashed with at least two different systems of norms.

While German-Canadians may prefer the use of *du* in Canada, however, they are still aware of, and able to adjust to, a different use in German-speaking Europe, as some of the examples showed. Beyond this awareness, however, the differences were connected to ideologies based on attitudes and stereotypes about its users. Thus, these ideologies may, in fact, be one of the reasons for choosing one pronoun over the other or for avoiding T/V use altogether. This supports observations made by Soukup (2009) that an interactant's language attitude can influence his or her decisions about whether to exploit a particular form in conversation. If an interactant views the use of *Sie* as conceited and stiff, for example, that interactant can either choose an exclusive use of *du*, or make use of avoidance strategies such as the use of English or a lack of the use of forms of address.

These findings suggest that work on the negotiation of forms of address must take into account not only factors such as age and status, but also additional factors involving identity, such as perceptions about local and global contexts, language attitudes and language ideologies, and socialization patterns. In the context of German-speaking Canada in particular, differences in usage cannot only be explained simply with an appeal to the attrition of German and a shift to English, but requires an examination of the way the use of these pronouns can be linked to the construction of a group identity. The question remains open whether these influences can be similarly linked to the use of forms of address in German-speaking Europe and beyond, but addressing this issue seems likely to yield promising fruit.

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