

SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ADDRESS USAGE IN GENERAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN LATVIA

The address is of great importance in every person's communication. It refers to communication between students, teachers and school administration. Their communication would be difficult without various address forms. Their successful choice influences further communication and mutual understanding. The very first words we say to others show our attitude. More often than not these are the words we address them by to attract their attention, to make them listen to us or act in some way. Very often the very first words determine people's further relations and start off the evaluation of the addresser. The first words a teacher says to his/her students are essential, for they exert influence on further interaction in classes.

The address cannot be researched in its linguistic aspect alone. It has to be studied in relation with areas of research like psychology, ethnolinguistics, education, ethics, sociology, and semiotics. Discourse analysis is also of great importance for researching the address. Exploring single phrases or sentences does not offer a holistic perspective on the communication, partners' relations or on the significance of such social factors as social distance and age in the use of the address. As early as 1958, two publications identified a new stage in studying discourse. One of them was R. Brown and A. Gilman's article *The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity* which laid the theoretical basis for the present investigation to a great extent (Brauns, Gilman 2003: 124–147).

The analysis of spontaneous speech is vital for studying speech ethnography. The present article is based on research conducted in numerous schools in Latvia. The author is a teacher herself and can make direct and shared unbiased observations on everyday communication among students, teachers and school administration.

The aim of the present article is to study the diversity of address forms in school with a focus on the traditional address forms that have been passed from generation to generation as well as those which can be considered innovative for the language. The article also analyses symmetry and asymmetry of address forms between different level language users at school.

The research is based on questionnaires completed by 718 students, 125 teachers representing 11 schools and 48 school principals from 48 other schools. Students and teachers from all regions of Latvia have been questioned. The majority of the students live in towns and cities (562), only 153 live in the countryside. The students' questionnaires were grouped according to the age of the respondents. One group included the 10–14 age span and the other 15–19 (see Figure 1).

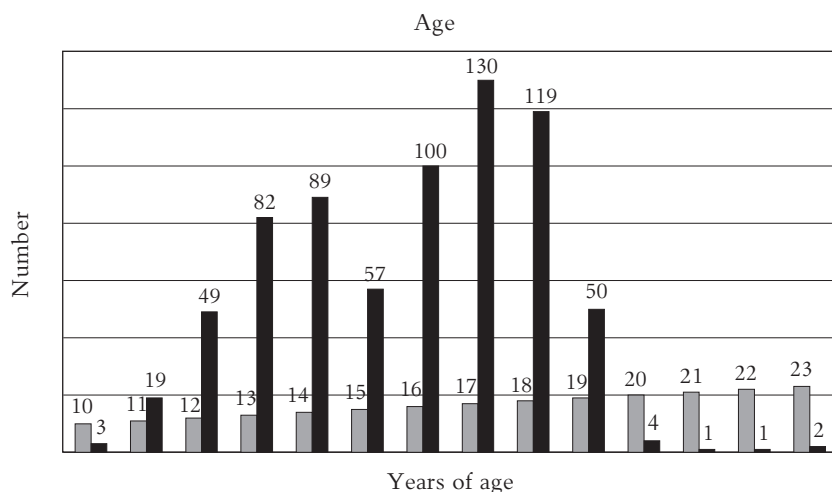


FIGURE 1. The number of surveyed students according to their age

REVIEW OF ADDRESS MODELS USED IN LATVIA IN THE PAST

The mode of addressing people and address forms reflect the time we live in, our national traditions and culture, the characteristic features of our ethnos. World languages show different strategies for establishing polite and

respectful relations. Scholars exploring languages have concluded that nations have both similarities and differences in the usage of address forms (Braun 1988; Brauns, Gilmans 2003; Ervina-Tripa 2003).

Every nation has its own particular address models of historical origin, although in the course of time they can be modified. One of the features of any address system is the possibility to inherit it by every new generation. The American linguist E. Sapir closely focused on the links between language, on the one hand, and social factors and culture, on the other. The essence of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is that language determines norms of thinking and behaviour. Every language moulds its own specific understanding of reality for its speakers (Sepīrs 1999: 87). Also R. Brown and A. Gilman have examined the use of the personal pronouns *thou* and *you* in different countries and have come to a conclusion that the semantics of the pronouns and their stylistic usage are determined by the language they are used in (Brauns, Gilmans 2003).

It is highly plausible that the use of diminutives (*Peļuks, Lāčuks, Saldumiņš, Miļums, Smiekliņš, Pekucītis, Gundīņ, Jānīt, Pauliņ*) in communication between students and teachers as well as using names of animals, birds, plants, and trees (*Briedis, Lapsa, Gliemezis, Žubīte, Cielava, Gulbis*) as nicknames in students' communication are related to old traditions of the Latvian nation in language usage. The students' nicknames were analyzed in more detail in the article *A Nickname to Every Student?* (Blūmane 2008). As numerous other nations have always lived on the territory of Latvia, their cultures have left traces in the usage of the Latvian language and address forms, too. This is why it is difficult to isolate the features of address usage characteristic of the Latvian ethnos from the borrowings from other ethnoses. The point of reference could be folklore. Nowadays Latvian folklore materials are the source for reconstructing ethnical traditions in the usage of address forms and their traditions.

Changes in the historical and political situation in Latvia have also influenced the usage of address forms. There is a great difference, for instance, in the choice of address forms at the end of the 19th century when the use of titles was widespread between social classes and those used in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century when Latvia was an independent country. Here are a few examples of addresses in letters written in 1899: *Viņa Augstībai kņazam / firstam / hercogam N. N.* ('to His Highness Grand Duke / Prince / Count N. N.');

Viņas Augstībai kņazienei / firstienei / hercogienei ('to Her Highness

Grand Duchess / Princess / Countess'); *Grāfiem, baroniem un fon kungiem (muižniekiem)* ('to Counts, Barons and von Gentlemen (country noblemen)'); *Viņa Godībai grāfam* ('to Honourable Count'); *Augstdzimušam un dižciltīgam baronam N. N. kungam* ('to Highly Born and Noble Baron Mr N. N. '); *Augstīgodājamai dižciltīgai baronietei fon N. N. kundzei* ('to Highly Honourable Noble Baroness von N. N. '); *Augstīgodāmajam barona fon N. N. lielkungam / lielmātei* ('to Highly Honourable Baron von N. N. Lord of the Manor / Baroness von N. N. Lady of the Manor'). The most characteristic address forms in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century were *kungs* / *kundze* ('sir/madam'). People were also addressed by the name of their farm because very often both the farm and its owner had the same name. The address forms used in the 40s to the end of the 80s of the 20th century (*biedrs* ('comrade'), *biedri* ('comrades'), *pilsonis* ('citizen'), *pilsoņi* ('citizens')) differ greatly from those used at the beginning of the 21st century when the influence of English is particularly marked in the way young people use address forms. In Soviet times in Latvia there was one address form the authorities had decreed: *biedri, biedre* ('comrade' – both masculine and feminine) which was used alone or together with the person's first name, surname, professional or honorary title (Blinkena 1968: 4). The word *kungs* ('sir'), the same as the Lithuanian word *ponas* were forced out of official communication. They were replaced by the word comrade–*draugas* in Lithuanian and *biedrs* in Latvian. Recent research has shown that the word *kungs* in Latvian is used much more often than *ponas* in Lithuanian (Kvašīte, Čepaitiene, Župerka 2003: 11). When analyzing the questionnaires completed by teachers and school principals, we can maintain that such forms of address, like *biedri, biedre, pilsonis, pilsonis*, are not used any more. Address forms used in Latvia in the 20s and 30s like *surname + kungs, surname + kundze* are gaining in popularity.

So the political system leaves its traces in the usage of address forms. However, there are no strict borderlines between the two above-mentioned periods, though the main tendencies in address usage in those periods can still be traced. Taking into consideration the above conditions, we can predict the address forms and their models used in school nowadays.

School is an interesting environment for research because this is a place where ancient language traditions merge with innovations. Older traditions in the Latvian language include the diverse use of diminutives both in terms of their lexical meaning and their form by all age groups, also by students,

as well as the use of the professional title *skolotāj* (teacher) and *director* (principal) which historically were used as the address forms *skolmeistara kungs* / *kundze* ('Mr Schoolmaster/Mrs Schoolmistress'). The use of the pronoun *Jūs* ('you') has also long-lasting language traditions in Latvian. Professor Andrejs Veisbergs of the University of Latvia considers that *tu* ('thou') and *jūs* ('you') are valuable in our language because they allow us to express shades of meaning. We can show our emotions by using *tu* or *jūs*, we can humiliate or honour the person we communicate with. Language is very subtle. If these forms did not have any meaning, language would drop them (Puķe 2000: 15).

USE OF THE PRONOUNS *TU* AND *JŪS* IN THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE

As an innovation in the Latvian language, we could mention the expansion of the use of the pronoun *tu* in situations where the respectful and reverential address form *Jūs* was used a few decades ago. Younger language users choose to address their teachers or class teachers by the pronoun *tu*. Fluctuations between the usage of *tu* and *jūs* exist among adults, too, and not only at school. Sometimes in a magazine or newspaper, television and radio interviews there are deviations from the accepted address form *Jūs* (Lauze 2003: 344; Ernstsone 2005: 27). So there are situations when people who know each other very little or do not know at all choose to use the form *tu* reciprocally. They do not observe the age and social status hierarchy which have been strictly observed up to now. Similar observations can be made in reference to the communication in school environment between teachers and the principal, sometimes also between students and teachers. What could the reasons be for this phenomenon in Latvia? One of the reasons is the influence of other cultures, because there are nations that have dropped one of the pronouns as, for instance, in English the singular pronoun *thou* was lost long ago and is used only in archaic style. Another reason could be the wave of democratization in society which started around 1990 in Latvia.

All language users in Latvia from time to time feel unsure about the choice between *tu* and *jūs*, especially when communication takes place in an informal setting and both the addresser and the addressee are not as close

as to use the address form *Tu*. Politeness, good friendly relations, power, solidarity—these are the criteria determining the choice of the pronouns *tu* or *jūs*. We can agree with the linguist A. Veisbergs' opinion that in case of doubt it is safer to use the address form *Jūs*.

In Latvian the pronoun *Jūs* has old usage traditions dating back to several centuries ago. The pronoun *Jūs* is of great value in the language as this form of address enables us to express respect, to distance ourselves from the other person, to pass over to using *tu* which in Latvian has a note of mutual intimacy and friendship. The last aspect is impossible in the languages lacking this form. The usage of the pronoun *tu* can be considered a means of communication having restricted possibilities to express social nuances and differences.

ADDRESS MODELS

Among young people various nicknames and phonetic modifications of first names or surnames are very popular, like *Siņča*, *Sindžs*, *Eļuka*, *Antrucīte*, *Lindočka*, *Santočka*, *Arčiks*, *Ārčijs*, *Zaņuks*, *Megucis*, *Ilžuks*, *Renčs*, *Giņčs*, *Janka*, *Janķels*, *Valčs*, *Kalvels*, *Dančiks*, as well as contracted forms of personal names, for example, *Rēne* (from the name *Renāte*), *Sola* (from *Solveiga*), *Mona* (from *Monika*), *Ruža* (from *Rudīte*). As the questionnaire was to be completed in writing, it confirmed an extremely great influence of English on the spelling and pronunciation of those names, for instance, *Pingy*, *Snoopy*, *W-man*, *Henrix*, *Džonis*, *Džastons*.

The forms most often used in schools in Latvia are nominal and pronominal address forms: a name, a nickname, an associative nickname (a phonetic modification of a name or a surname), a contracted form of a name or a surname, the use of a surname alone (which is very popular as an address form among 15–19 year olds), the use of a name and a patronymic, a diminutive form of a name or a surname, an address inversion (*meit* ('daughter'), *dēls* ('son'), combined address forms: an interjection + an address, *kolēģīt* ('colleague') + *Tu*, *kolēģīt* + *Jūs*, *draugs* ('friend') + *Tu*, *Jūs* + *the name*, *skolotāj* ('teacher') + *the name*, *skolotāj* + *the surname*, *direktor* ('principal') + *the surname*, *director* + *the name* and other similar forms. Sometimes the verb form indicates the address chosen, for example, *lūdzu, pasakiet!* ('could you tell me, please?').

Third person forms are used, too. If a person is not sure about the closeness of mutual relations, the listener is addressed using the third person singular form (Lauze 2004: 28). The author of the present article has observed such address forms in the communication among teachers during the breaks or when the lecturer greets the audience.

Correlation rules in school are realized both on a vertical and horizontal level. The vertical relativity becomes apparent in the operation of the principles of power, the horizontal—in cooperative ties. The vertical dimension is realized between a student and a teacher, a student and the principal, a teacher and the principal, the horizontal dimension—between students or teachers. The vertical address model is mainly used in formal communication, and the horizontal in informal communication. Variations in the forms of address are mostly identified on the horizontal level.

The address forms existing between a teacher and the principal for the greatest part are asymmetric. Teachers address the principal by such forms as *you*, *director* (principal), *you* + *surname*. But principals address teachers by using their *first names*, saying *thou* to them which points to hierarchy and social distance (see Figures 2, 3, and 4).

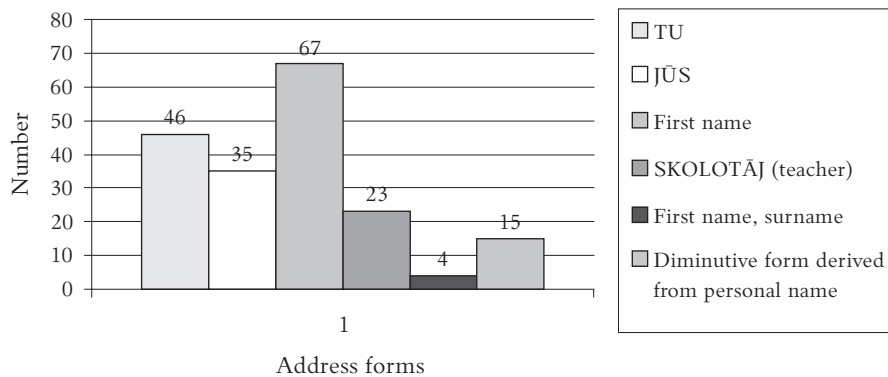


FIGURE 2. Forms of address used by the school principal with young teachers

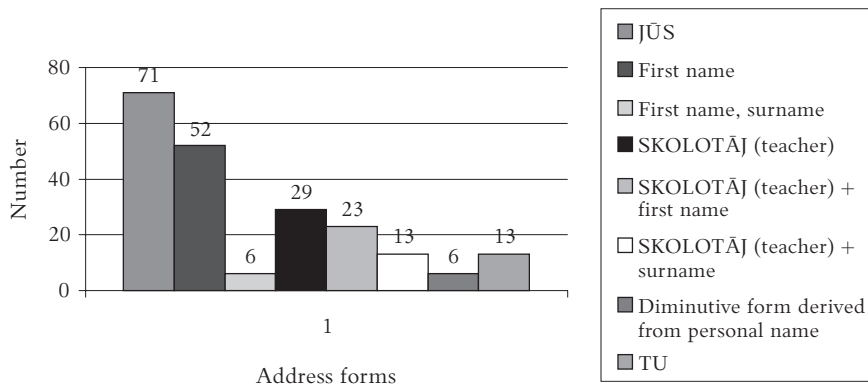


FIGURE 3. Forms of address used by the school principal with older teachers

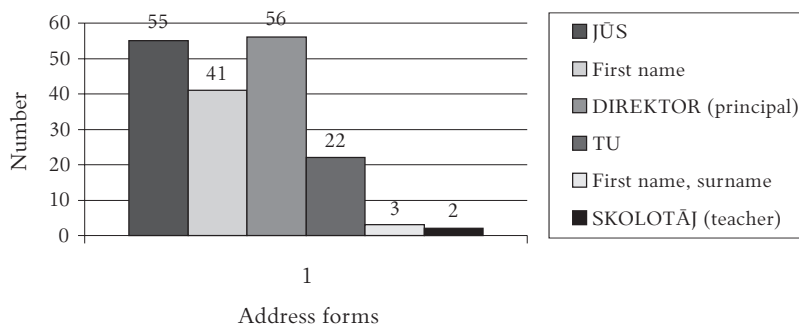


FIGURE 4. Forms of address used by teachers with the school principal

10–14 year old students address their classmates mainly by their first name, nickname and by the second person singular pronoun *tu*. 85% of the youngsters in this age group use the first name. The address forms used during school years survive in mutual communication forever. When classmates and friends meet after long years, in informal communication they use the old address forms.

Among 15–19 year old teenagers, the dominating address forms are the first name, nickname (66% of cases) and the second person singular pronoun *tu*. Quite often students use diminutive forms derived from their personal names.

For the communication between a student and a teacher in most cases the asymmetric address model is used. The dominant word among 10–14 year old students to address their teachers is *skolotāj* ('teacher') (37%), the address *you* is used not so often (25%) (see Figure 5).

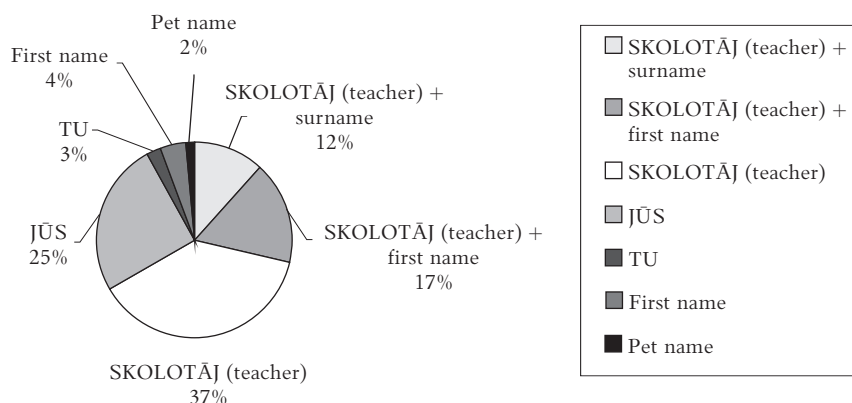


FIGURE 5. Forms of addressing teachers at school

The teacher addresses a 10–14 year old by *tu* and his or her first name. Symmetric address forms between a teacher and a student appear, too. A student addresses a teacher by the following forms: *skolotāj* ('teacher') + *the first name*, *the first name*, *tu*.

If the teacher and the student use symmetric address forms, a suppressed conflict might be manifested in one or another form. If such address forms are used, it is the teacher who may feel psychological discomfort if the suggestion to choose reciprocally symmetric address forms has not come from him/her. The choice of reciprocally symmetric address forms between teachers, a teacher and the principal usually is not the reason for conflicts between communication partners. But the use of reciprocally symmetric forms between a student and a teacher may cause conflicts in communication. They are resolved by mutual agreement on the address forms. In symmetric address forms between teachers there is no distance; or if there is, it is concealed, "silent" distance. When asymmetric address forms are used, the distance is obvious. Power asymmetry can be expressed not only by the pronoun *you*, but also by the title, the plural form of a verb or other means.

With students becoming older (15–19), the use of reciprocally symmetric forms between a teacher and a student tends to increase. 19% of the surveyed students address their teacher by using the address form *skolotāj* ('teacher') + *the first name*. The linguist L. Lauze (Lauze 2002: 31–32) has come to similar conclusions. However, the asymmetric address model is observed more often. *You – you* relations exist in only 19% of the cases.

In the relations between teachers, symmetric addresses are the most often used forms, though in relations between an older and a younger colleague asymmetry is observed. Asymmetry is especially pronounced in relations between teachers who some time before were both involved in a relation between a student and a teacher. Former students feel respect towards their former teachers.

Address forms at school have changed considerably. It is especially noticeable in the usage of *tu* and *jūs*, as well as in the diversity and usage of phonetic modifications of nicknames, first names and surnames.

Young people's choice of address forms is free and open to the influence of other cultures. In the communication between students and teachers, asymmetric address forms are used expressing distance and respect towards the teacher. The use of symmetric forms between a student, a teacher and the principal points to the teachers being open to new tendencies in language and education.

The address system at school consists of numerous diverse address forms. The choice of an address variant depends on language traditions, social etiquette and other social factors. Age is the decisive factor in determining the address behaviour at school. Gender is insignificant in this respect, especially among students. The most important factor in the choice of linguistic means in the communication among students, teachers and school principals is the level of acquaintance. The better the speaker knows the addressee, the more careless and free their attitude towards the choice of linguistic means is. None of the above-mentioned social groups has a faultless address competence, for each person is an individual. This refers to both participants in communication: the speaker and the addressee.

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SOCIOLINGVISTINĒ LATVIJOS BENDROJO LAVINIMO ĪSTAIGOSE VARTOJAMŲ KREIPIMOSI FORMŲ ANALIZĒ

S a n t r a u k a

Mokyklose ir bendrojo lavinimo īstaigose vartojamas kreipimosi formas daugiau-
sia lemia komunikācijas ir tarpusavio supratimo sēkmē. Kreipimosi formas socio-
lingvistikojē neapsiriboja šauksmininko linksnio vartojamais daiktavardžiais, bet
apima ģvardžius ir asmens pareigas, vardā bei pavardē nusakančias žodžių grupes.
Juos tiriant svarbu atsižvelgti į visuomenėje vyraujančias etiketo normas, komuni-
kacijos simetriją ir asimetriją, vertikalių ir horizontalių komunikacijos lygmenį
bei oficialų ir neoficialų kalbos stilių.

Šiame tyrime remiamasi 718 mokinių, 125 mokytojų bei 48 mokyklų direkto-
rių apklausų duomenimis. Dauguma mokinių (562) gyvena miestuose ir mieste-
liuose. Mokinių anketos suskirstytos pagal amžiaus grupes: 10–14 ir 15–19 metų.

Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad daugumoje mokyklų bendravimas tarp moki-
nių ir mokytojų yra formalus, tai atspindi kreipimosi formų vartoseną. Kreipiantis
į mokytoją, vyrauja forma *skolotāj* (mokytojas) + pavardė ir panašios formos. Tarp
mokinių vyrauja vardažodinės kreipimosi formos, tokios kaip vardas, pravardė,
asociatyvi pravardė (fonetiškai modifikuotas vardo ir pavardės garsų junginys), tik
pavardė. Pastaroji būdinga 15–19 metų jaunuoliams. Mokyklų bendruomenėse pa-
sitaiko ir tokių kreipimosi formų, kaip vardas ir tėvavardis, mažybinė vardo ir pa-
vardės forma, jaustukas + kreipinys, *kolēģīt* (kolega) + *tu*, *kolēģīt* (kolega) + *Jūs*,
draugs (draugas) + *tu*, *Jūs* + vardas, *skolotāj* (mokytojas) + vardas, *direktor* (direk-
torius) + pavardė, *direktor* (direktorius) + vardas ir t. t.

Jaunimo vartojamos kreipimosi formos laisvesnės, dažnai veikiamos kitų kultū-
rų. Asimetriška komunikacija tarp mokinių ir mokytojų dažniausiai rodo didesnę
distanciją bei pagarbą mokytojui. Simetriškų formų vartojimas tarp skirtingų lyg-
menų rodo mokytojo atvirumą naujiems kalbos ir švietimo polinkiams. Pastebėtas
vyresniųjų klasių mokinių (19 proc.) polinkis bendraujant su mokytoju vartoti to-
kią kreipimosi formą: *skolotāj* (mokytojas) + vardas.

Asimetriškos kreipimosi formos būdingos jaunesniųjų ir vyresniųjų mokytojų
bendravimo situacijoms bei pokalbiams tarp mokyklos direktoriaus ir mokytojo.

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