

Markéta Štauberová, Forms of address in Finnish in the context of dynamic politeness norms, Ústav obecné lingvistiky, 2016

Posudek vedoucí práce

Markéta Štauberová has taken on a highly interesting and relevant topic, the question of Finnish forms of address (2.pl., or the V-form and 2.sg., or the T-form), the use and appropriateness of which is perceived as lacking consensus in contemporary Finnish society, which underwent the so-called du-reformen in the 1960s and 1970s. First and foremost, it should be pointed out that the author has displayed an atypical level of enthusiasm for the project, which was particularly visible in its early phases, when she consulted a number of relevant language experts, travelled to Finland, conducted participant observation (and even several Labovian-style tests of the use of address forms in customer-service encounters), and read about popular opinions of the studied phenomenon extensively. This preparation enabled her to effectively organize and conduct interviews during a subsequent trip.

The resulting thesis includes a well-informed summary of approaches to politeness in connection with the pragmatic turn in linguistics (here it is noteworthy that the author's background in philosophy came in handy), awareness of the limitations of various theories and their applicability to various languages and cultures, as well as of the research done on politeness in the Finnish context. In addition, the reviewed literature is not merely limited to an initial section of the text, but rather, it is thoroughly integrated into the qualitative data analysis, which is based on interviews with twenty people divided into age groups depending on the phase of their socialization at the time of the du-reformen. Particularly interesting is the consideration of various domains (school, the military, customer service and others) in which the hierarchical structure and organization of social activities may be connected to differing expectations regarding forms of address and, in fact, their management in the form of written directives for use, such as in certain department stores.

Two more general slight problems with the thesis are those of which the author is demonstrably aware: the question of the representativeness of the sample and the issue of actual usage vs. declared usage (see, for example, the first research question the thesis poses) and the resulting formulations in the analysis. Both issues are reflected in a manner which can be considered adequate given the exploratory nature of the project.

Overall, the thesis is written in highly intelligible English (this choice of language for the thesis was based on the author's initiative), with only occasional slight grammatical or stylistic deviations. At the points where the author translates citations from Czech-language works (e.g. Auer, Válková), it would have been appropriate to note that the translation is her own.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Do non-native speakers of Finnish, in the author's view, have any influence on possible shifts in or perceptions of the use of address forms?
- 2) In the conclusion, the author suggests that an appropriate follow-up to the research would be a quantitative study. How might such a study be designed?

Overall, I recommend that the thesis be defended with a final grade of either "very good" (velmi dobře) or "excellent" (výborně) depending on the oral defense.

Prague, August 30, 2016

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