



Article scientifique

Article

2009

Published version

Open Access

This is the published version of the publication, made available in accordance with the publisher's policy.

Address pronouns as a problem in French–Swedish translation and translation revision

Künzli, Alexander

How to cite

KÜNZLI, Alexander. Address pronouns as a problem in French–Swedish translation and translation revision. In: Babel, 2009, vol. 55, n° 4, p. 364–380. doi: 10.1075/babel.55.4.04kun

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:191260>

Publication DOI: [10.1075/babel.55.4.04kun](https://doi.org/10.1075/babel.55.4.04kun)

Address pronouns as a problem in French– Swedish translation and translation revision*

Alexander Künzli

Zürich University of Applied Sciences

1. Conceptual frame of reference

In many European languages, such as French, German, or Italian, there are two words for ‘you’. One is employed to address someone you are close to, or who has a lower social standing. The other is employed to address someone with whom you are less familiar or who is socially superior (see Fasold 1990: chap. 1). This distinction is generally referred to as T/V dichotomy, from the familiar Latin T pronoun *tu* and the deferential Latin V pronoun *vos* (Brown and Gilman 1960). Contemporary English, on the other hand, has only one second-person pronoun. American subtitlers of French movies may thus have to find a way to linguistically mark when the conversation between two actors shifts from the V form *vous* to the T form *tu*. In business communication, companies will have to decide how to address employees and customers when going international. The examples of IKEA and Hennes & Mauritz, two global players with roots in Sweden where the T form *du* is the unmarked — i.e., general, usual form — show that this issue can raise problems. They received mixed reactions when trying to institutionalize the T form *tu* and *du* in their branches in French and German-speaking countries (Clyne, Kretzenbacher, Norrby, and Schüpbach 2006: 299). The use of an inappropriate address pronoun can even become a legal issue. In accordance with paragraph 185 of the German Penal Code, German courts may judge the use of the not explicitly allowed T form *du* as an offense, for example when employed by an angry car driver towards a traffic warden (see <http://www.ratgeberrecht.de>).

This paper deals with the processing of address pronouns in French–Swedish translation. It is based on material from two studies in which 20 participants were asked to translate a user guide or to revise an advertising letter from French into Swedish, while thinking aloud. The verbalizations were transcribed into think-aloud protocols (TAPs) and analyzed in parallel with the written translations.

* Research support from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Reg. no. J2004-0368) is gratefully acknowledged. I would also like to thank Jennifer Evans for editing my English.

TAPs have been used as a method for investigating the cognitive and affective factors involved in translating for twenty years or so (Jääskeläinen 1999; Krings 1986; Künzli 2003). More recently, they have also turned out to be a useful tool for investigating language-pair related translation problems (Englund Dimitrova 2005; Trandem 2005).

Let us first briefly look at the address systems in the two languages dealt with here. French has two address pronouns for the second-person singular. The V form *vous* is used to express neutrality, polite distance, or formality. It implies a socially more distant relationship to the addressee than the T form *tu*, which assumes intimacy, solidarity, or lack of formality (Charaudeau 1992: 123; Riegel, Pellat, and Rioul 1999: 197). The situation in French is analogous to the one described by Clyne *et al.* (2006) for German, which has two coexistent systems with unmarked T and V. Thus, *tu* is normally used within family, friends, among young people, from adult to child, and between people of equal status who have known each other for some time, whereas *vous* is the norm in all other situations (Coffen 2002). *Vous* is used both as second-person singular and plural V form and as second-person plural V and T form, whereas e.g. German distinguishes in the latter case between *Sie* and *ihr*.

In Swedish, the proper way to address people of the same or higher social status had traditionally been by title. In the early 20th century, an attempt was made to replace the use of titles with *ni*, the standard second-person plural pronoun. Widmark's (1993) overview of the development of *ni* explains why this attempt may have failed. *Ni* had been used as a casual address pronoun among the aristocracy since the 18th century. It was regarded as a practical correspondence to the French *vous*, the language spoken at the Swedish court. Yet when speaking to its servants, the aristocracy preferred employing a lower register. The *ni*-form was also part of the register used among commoners, i.e., people without a title. In other words, it was not wrong to employ *ni* downwards, even if *du* was more natural in this case. However, it was not possible to employ *ni* upwards because the aristocracy regarded *ni* as marker of equality. For the same reason, the aristocracy was reluctant to use *ni* in communicating with the middle classes. They were kept at a polite distance by the use of titles. The middle classes thus came to adopt a negative attitude towards *ni*. Swedish ended up in quite a special situation, i.e., as a language that lacked a second-person address pronoun for reciprocal use between people who want to avoid familiarity.

In the 1960s, the previously significant distinctions of class became less important and the second-person singular T form *du* became popular and the standard even in formal contexts, both in oral and written communication. The Swedish address system thus developed toward the current state of affairs for English, with one address pronoun. However, since the 1990s, the use of the V form *ni* has

reemerged, this time with an analogous function to the French *vous*. It is used primarily in service and business situations, and seems more readily accepted in writing (for an overview of the development, see Clyne *et al.* 2006; Teleman, Hellberg, and Andersson 1999:266–70).

In written communication, an additional complexity of the Swedish address system lies in the lowercase/uppercase distinction. Thus, writers sometimes capitalize the T form *du* to signal a higher degree of politeness or formality. The Swedish language council does not take a stand in the question of T vs. V. However, it recommends lowercase *du*, remarking that capitalized *Du* is often interpreted as distancing. Conversely, it recommends capital *Ni* rather than lowercase *ni* for the V form, probably to make it easier to distinguish between the formal second-person singular and plural *Ni* and the informal second-person plural *ni* (*Svenska skrivregler* 2000).

French and Swedish thus diverge in address practice. Moreover, there appears to be a recent change in the Swedish address system. Therefore, the choice of the appropriate address pronoun may be a potential problem in translation from French into Swedish. The passage between these two languages implies transferring a message from a source language with two coexistent address systems into a target language with one address pronoun, but in which a second pronoun nevertheless is possible. Surprisingly, however, this phenomenon does not yet seem to have been investigated in its own right, with the exception of two studies dealing with literary translation. Thus, Engwall (2005, 2006) compared address in two plays by the Swedish playwright August Strindberg and their French translations. The studies reveal how Strindberg varied address (pronouns, titles, and proper names) for stylistic purposes, to mark both differences in the social status of the protagonists and changes in their state of mind and relationships. Engwall also illustrates how certain stylistic effects pursued by Strindberg are lost in the French versions, due to the different connotations of certain address forms in the two languages. The present paper sets out to further shed light on this sociolinguistic translation problem. We will now have a brief look at the method used before presenting the data.

2. Method

The data come from two sets of experiments: a translation task and a translation revision task. The translation task included two groups of participants: 4 trainees following a program in French–Swedish translation at Örebro University and at Uppsala University respectively, and 6 professional translators. In the translation revision task, there was one group of 10 professional translators. The two

tasks had not been designed to specifically investigate the handling of address pronouns. They were part of two research projects conducted to study cognitive, affective, and linguistic aspects of French–German and French–Swedish translation and translation revision. It was only during data analysis that the processing of address pronouns as a language-pair related translation problem became manifest, not least because there were no corresponding verbalizations in the French-to-German part of the material.

The participants in the translation task were asked to translate a user guide for a telephone with a fax and answering machine function from France Telecom. The text has an overall didactic-instructive function. The aim is to give the users the instructions necessary to install and use the machine properly. However, the introduction part of the text also has a strong motivational function; the company thanks the users for having bought the product, advises them to carefully read the guide, and employs a wide range of rhetoric strategies to lay the foundations for a long-term relationship with them and encourage them to purchase additional products.

The participants in the translation revision task were asked to revise three Swedish draft translations of three French source texts. The texts used include a judicial decision, an installation manual for an avalanche safety net, and an advertising letter for wine. Here we will only deal with the results from the revision of this last text. It is a letter sent by a winery to its regular customers. The text has an overall persuasive function; in its repeated exhortations to the customers to take advantage of the company's offers, it has an additional instructive function.

One of the differences between the two tasks is that in the revision task, the participants were presented with a possible Swedish translation of the French V form *vous*. The translator asked to write the draft translation to be revised had opted for the capitalized V form *Ni*—the marked form of address, even in business or service situations, although more accepted in writing according to Norrby and Håkansson (2003). The participants were asked to make any necessary changes in the draft translation. They were thus free to replace V with T. However, one may suppose that the original translator's decision to use V must have influenced their decision making to some extent.

The sessions with the trainees were conducted in a room at the university and those with the translators at their homes, i.e., their usual workplaces. All participants had access to a computer and other information sources they normally use in their work. In the translation task, the participants received two parallel texts (user guides for similar products in Swedish that both employ the T form *du*). The participants were free to consult them during task execution. In both tasks, the participants were first given general information about the purpose of the study and were then familiarized with the think-aloud instructions. While they were

translating or revising and thinking aloud, I made a note of their use of information sources. At the end of the session, the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire, providing additional information on their training and work experience.

3. Results

Let us start by analyzing the data from a product perspective and looking at the different solutions chosen by the participants in the translation task to render the French V form *vous* into Swedish.

Two preliminary comments regarding Table 1 and Table 2. First, in identifying the different occurrences of T and V, the inflection forms were taken into consideration. Second, address pronouns appearing at sentence beginning were disregarded from the categorization between uppercase and lowercase (*du* vs. *Du* and *ni* vs. *Ni*).

Table 1 shows that both the T form and the V form are employed as address pronouns to translate the French *vous* into Swedish. Within V, both lowercase and uppercase solutions appear. The T form is the most frequent solution, with 9 participants opting — at least among other solutions — for *du*, and only 3 for the V form *ni/Ni*. The table also reveals within-subjects variation. Three of 10 participants employ two different address forms in the same text. Agneta (S) employs lowercase and uppercase V, whereas Camilla (S) and Elin (T) opt for both *du* and *ni*. The denotational value of the French *vous* can shift throughout a text. However, such a shift is not likely in this user guide text. The interpretation of the French V form *vous* as referring to multiple addressees at one point and to a single addressee at another, and its translation into Swedish by *ni* (T form plural) and *du* (T form singular) seems therefore neither plausible nor justifiable. We can assume that *vous* designates a single addressee. Besides, the think-aloud protocol analyses

Table 1. Translation solutions in the translation task

Name	du	Du	ni	Ni
Agneta (S) ^a			X	X
Camilla (S)	X		X	
Sanna (S)	X			
Ylva (S)	X			
Elin (T)	X		X	
Joakim (T)	X			
Kristina (T)	X			
Lotta (T)	X			
Niklas (T)	X			
Pernilla (T)	X			

^a Henceforth, we will use the abbreviation “S” for student and “T” for translator.

will demonstrate that the participants' verbalizations deal not with the question of singular vs. plural anyway, but with the T/V dichotomy. They will also show that the hesitation between lowercase and uppercase V should be interpreted as revealing an underlying uncertainty in translational behavior rather than as a manifestation of a mere typing error.

Although the number of participants is far too low to allow any generalization, one might at least formulate the hypothesis of a possible correlation between consistency in behavior and the choice of a specific address pronoun on the one hand, and experience of translation and age on the other. The V form is used by 2 out of 4 trainee translators, but only by 1 out of 6 professional translators. What is more, Agneta (S), Camilla (S), and Elin (T) are the youngest participants. It is possible that these participants' behavior illustrates the fact that the younger generation is largely unaware of the negative connotations *ni* has for some speakers, as Clyne *et al.* (2006) showed, and that they follow the more recent phenomenon of using V in (written) service or business situations.

Finally, it must also be stressed that the participants had the possibility of avoiding direct address by resorting to the passive voice or impersonal constructions. The written translations show evidence of the use of this strategy. In some instances, the avoidance of direct address can be the result of the translator's uncertainty regarding the appropriate address pronoun. In other instances, however, translators appear to do so for cultural reasons, i.e., to make the text less personal and more sober and thereby adapt it to what they believe are the expectations of the Swedish target audience.

Let us now consider the findings from the translation revision task. Table 2 reveals that interindividual and intraindividual variation in the translation revision task is larger than in the translation task. The V form *Ni* is the most frequent choice (6 participants), followed by *ni* (5 participants), *du* (2 participants), and *Du* (1 participant). The texts of 4 participants reveal internal variation insofar as two

Table 2. Translation solutions in the translation revision task

Name	du	Du	ni	Ni
Cecilia (T)			X	
Filippa (T)			X	X
Gustav (T)		X		
Ingrid (T)			X	X
Joel (T)				X
Klara (T)				X
Linnea (T)	X			
Oscar (T)	X		X	
Rebecca (T)				X
Tilda (T)			X	X

different address forms are employed. In 3 cases, they concern the lowercase and uppercase distinction of *ni/Ni*, whereas Oscar (T) employs both *du* and *ni*. He justifies the use of *ni* in one sentence by arguing that *vous* refers to multiple addressees in that sentence as opposed to the rest of the text, where it refers to the single target customer. *Vous* does indeed indicate plural reference in that sentence, as revealed by the plural -s endings in *collectionneurs* and *amateurs*: *En plus, si vous êtes collectionneurs ou amateurs de vraies raretés...* ‘Moreover, if you are collectors or lovers of real rarities...’ These instances of *ni* in Oscar’s translation must therefore be interpreted as second-person plural T form. Interestingly, however, Oscar changes the second occurrence of explicit plural *vous* (as revealed by the plural -s in *gagnants*) from *Ni* to informal singular *du* when translating the following sentence: *Vous êtes donc doublement gagnants en profitant de nos offres exceptionnelles...* ‘You are winning twice by taking advantage of our special offers...’ As a matter of fact, it is possible to interpret all instances of *vous* as references to the single, prospective target reader, the second pole in the fictitious dialogue between *we* (the company) and *you* (the consumer) — a rhetoric strategy used by companies to address the consumer in a (pseudo-)personal tone (Charaudeau 1992: 160). Moreover, from a target-language point of view, the singular T form *du* is the standard in Swedish advertising texts (Nowak & Andrén 1981: 46–7, 119).

Cecilia’s (T) decision to change uppercase *Ni* into lowercase *ni* also needs some further explanation. It is possible that she interpreted the French *vous* as designating multiple addressees throughout the text, in which case lowercase *ni*, as in Oscar’s (T) case, refers to the second-person plural T form. However, her TAP reveals that her thought processes deal with the T/V dichotomy rather than the question of singular vs. plural. Therefore, one could also interpret her decision as a manifestation of her wish to make address less formal in Swedish by turning the uppercase *Ni* into a lowercase *ni*. Indeed, from a data-driven point of view, the participants’ perception of the degree of formality can be represented as follows: *du* → *Du* → *ni* → *Ni*, going from *du* as least formal to *Ni* as most formal address pronoun.

The most striking difference between the revision task and the translation task is that in the translation task, 7 out of 10 participants opted for the T form *du* throughout, whereas the picture is reversed in the revision task, with 6 out of 10 participants employing the capitalized V form *Ni*. The decision of the original translator to opt for the capitalized V form certainly has to be taken into consideration here. One of the main principles when revising somebody else’s draft translation is that revisers must be able to justify all changes made in the draft translation (Mossop 2001: 149). It is possible that some participants may have considered the use of the formal *Ni* in the Swedish draft translation as inappropriate, but felt unable to motivate their choice, deciding to retain *Ni*. Because of the complex de-

velopment of the Swedish address system, it is not unlikely that speakers and writers do not always feel able to justify why a given pronoun seems less appropriate in a given context. However, it is also possible that the parallel texts put at the participants' disposal in the translation task played a role here. Even if not all participants used these texts, those who did so may have decided to follow their example and employ T.

Let us now take a look at different TAP (think-aloud protocol) excerpts that illustrate various aspects of the problem experienced by trainees and professionals when trying to find the appropriate address pronoun in the Swedish target texts. We will again start with data from the translation task. In excerpt [1] below, Agneta (S) processes the segment *vous venez d'acquérir le Téléphone-Fax-Répondeur GALEO 4710 et nous vous en remercions* 'you have just acquired the telephone-fax-answering machine GALEO 4710 and we thank you for this':¹

[1] Agneta (S)

we thank you / ni [=V] have / ni [=V] or du [=T]? / I'll probably capitalize ni [=V] ... we thank you and we / thank Er [=V] that sounds a bit un-Swedish but / you're supposed to capitalize Er [=V] ... now the question is whether I'll capitalize Er [=V] / or not / it's not Swedish / maybe / I think it's Germanized ... I'll paraphrase a bit / to see what it'll look like / that way I also avoid this Ert [=V]

Agneta (S)

and now I'll capitalize Er [=V] and Ni [=V] anyway it just / happened like this ... okay now I'll write Ni [=V] because that's how I started

In excerpt [1], Agneta (S) first expresses uncertainty regarding the choice between V and T. The decision to opt for V triggers the next uncertainty: the choice between lowercase and uppercase V. Agneta (S) states that a capitalized V is not very Swedish, adding — in accordance with the rules of the Swedish language council — that she is nevertheless supposed to capitalize V. This decision is also questioned: Agneta (S) feels that the *Ni* form is not proper Swedish but a calque from German; she is probably thinking of the German V form *Sie*. Finally, she decides to paraphrase the sentence to get rid of some instances of direct address. Excerpt [2] contains Agneta's (S) verbalizations while rereading her draft translation. The verbalizations suggest that she feels unable to motivate her choice of the V form, deciding, as a last resort, to be at least coherent by consistently using *Ni*. However, as we have seen in Table 1, her translation contains both lowercase and uppercase

1. The verbalizations alone do not allow us to tell whether the participant refers to lowercase or uppercase *du/Du* and *ni/Ni*. Therefore, the transcriptions of the participants' verbalizations of the T and V forms are always written in lowercase unless the participant explicitly refers to one or the other form. Slashes indicate pauses; underlining indicates stressed syllables; (()) indicates inaudible verbalizations; colon indicates prolonged syllables; () indicates uncertain verbalizations; and italics mark English translations of readings of the French source text.

V forms. Her verbalizations suggest that inconsistent use of address forms can hardly be interpreted as a manifestation of a mere typing error, but rather is due to the fact that participants shift between different address forms in different phases of the translation process.

Next, let us look at Camilla's (S) TAP. Her translation contains instances of both T and V:

[3] Camilla (S)

your [=V] Galeo forty seventy (()) / *er* [=V] forty seventy that sounds as if well / I can check how they write in Telia's text (she consults parallel text from Telia) ... they write **du** [=T] / actually in Swedish / one uses most of the time / **du** [=T] / but **du** [=T] sounds (()) / I'll write / so that **du** [=T] can use

[4] Camilla (S)

address yourself [=V] *to the customer service / of your retailer / aha customer service / address er* [=V] *to / then* (()) *er* [=V] or **du** [=T] (()) / yes address *er* [=V] no / maybe I should have *er* [=V] everywhere but I can't write so that / *ni* [=V] can use / um / address *er* [=V] I'll write *er* [=V] again you have to be consistent

Excerpts [3] and [4] show similarities with Agneta's (S) translation process. Camilla's (S) first Swedish version of the French V form *vous* is a literal — from a structural point of view — translation by means of *ni*. The consultation of a parallel text that employs T triggers the comment that T is the standard in contemporary Swedish. Nevertheless, Camilla (S) shifts back to V, declaring that one at least has to be consistent, yet still forgets to replace one instance of *du*. All in all, these two trainees do not seem to rely on either their intuition or evidence from the parallel texts. Instead, they cling to the source-language structure.

This is quite contrary to what happens in this regard in the translation process of Kristina (T), a professional translator. Her TAP reveals that even if a participant is consistent in his or her choice of an address pronoun, the decision may be taken only after a considerable amount of hesitation:

[5] Kristina (T)

ni [=V] have acquired / how do they write in this other text? (she consults parallel text from Telia) ... **du** [=T] / here they write **du** [=T] and um (she consults parallel text from Häger) / here they write thank **du** [=T] for choosing

[6] Kristina (T)

address yourself / this address *er* [=V] *to / address er* [=V] / no now comes this / address **dig** [=T] *to ...* (she consults own parallel text from JVC) ... um contact **din** [=T] retailer / for all information right! if **du** [=T] are unable to solve the problem um let's see / contact / it's better to write address **dig** [=T] haha! contact / **din** [=T] retailer

[7] Kristina (T)

allows allows / this machine / *er* [=V] is not possible in Sweden it has to be **dig** [=T]

Excerpt [5] shows that even in a professional's translation process, the first Swedish version of the French V form *vous* can be a literal, marked translation: the V form *ni*. However, contrary to the trainees, Kristina (T) moves from V to T when processing the source-text segment *vous venez d'acquérir le Téléphone-Fax-Répondeur GALEO 4710 et nous vous en remercions* 'you have just acquired the telephone-fax-answering machine GALEO 4710 and we thank you for this', i.e., after finding evidence for T in a parallel text. Still, it seems that the choice of *du* has to be renegotiated at new occurrences of *vous*. This is what excerpt [6] suggests, where Kristina (T) processes the segment *pour toute information supplémentaire sur les produits et services FRANCE TELECOM, adressez-vous à l'accueil professionnel de votre Agence Commerciale* 'for further information about the products and services of FRANCE TELECOM, address yourself to the customer service of your retailer'. Excerpt [7] reveals another interesting aspect: variation in the use of the Swedish V form between Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish. Kristina (T) belongs to the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, where the use of *ni* is more frequent, apparently as a result of the influence from the Finnish V form *te* (see Clyne *et al.* 2006: 311). Kristina's (T) verbalization that in Sweden, the use of the V form would be inappropriate, can therefore be interpreted as a further piece of evidence of the existence of a national variation in Swedish address.

Let us now look at the process data from the translation revision task:

[8] Ingrid (T)

now Ni [=V] can find / Ni [=V] / no way ... offer / Er [=V] in lowercase E

[9] Ingrid (T)

no matter whether du [=T] / (she sighs) I actually want to have du [=T] / as / address throughout here / I'll go up and change it from the beginning now du [=T] can find the fantastic Californian wines / from this autumn on we can offer / dig [=T] / you address a single person anyway in a (()) when you write letters ... I'm looking for more instances of Ni [=V] here

In excerpt [8], Ingrid (T) processes the source-text segment *désormais vous trouverez les prestigieux vins californiens signés Beringer Vineyards chez Obrist Vevey* 'now you can find the prestigious California wines from Beringer Vineyards at Obrist Vevey'. She reacts against the use of uppercase V and decides to replace uppercase with lowercase *ni*. However, excerpt [9] reveals that this decision is also challenged. Ingrid (T) starts replacing the V form *Ni* by the T form *du*, declaring that letters are addressed to a single addressee anyway. This verbalization suggests that Ingrid (T) interprets the capitalized V form *Ni* used by the original translator as referring to multiple addressees. In the final version of her translation, Ingrid (T) opts for the V form after all. She also seems to have regretted her decision to switch from uppercase to lowercase because most instances of direct address are capitalized. Once again, the TAP data illustrate that even in cases where (almost)

no changes are made in the written text, the TAPs can contain numerous indicators of non-automatic, effortful processing.

Cecilia (T) is more consistent than Ingrid (T) insofar as her revised translation only contains lowercase V:

[10] Cecilia (T)

Ni [=V] can now now Ni [=V] can find right this f- Ni [=V] I don't like capitalized Ni [=V] that's not what the Swedish language council recommends

[11] Cecilia (T)

we thank Er [=V] / capitalized Er [=V] no many thanks if Ni [=V] (()) make ert [=V] choice and then Er [=V] and Er [=V] and Er [=V] we don't have so many Er [=V] in Swedish it's du [=T] nowadays we thank Er [=V] if Ni [=V] make Ert [=V] choice at once / and communicate us as quickly as possible Era [=V] choi- maybe we should change it into du [=T] and dig [=T] / we will thus be able to immediately reserve Ert [=V] wine and prepare Er [=V] delivery (she laughs) ... so many / personal pronouns that sounds a bit / stilted

Cecilia's (T) verbalization in excerpt [10], that the Swedish language council advises against the use of capitalized V, is not correct, as we have seen. It recommends uppercase *Ni* as V form in both singular and plural. Excerpt [11] contains Cecilia's (T) verbalizations during the processing of the source-text segment *Nous vous remercions de faire votre choix dès maintenant et de nous transmettre aussitôt vos désirs. Nous pourrons ainsi immédiatement réserver votre vin et préparer votre livraison dans les meilleurs délais* 'We will thank you for making your choice at once and communicating your wishes to us as quickly as possible. We will thus be able to immediately reserve your wine and prepare your delivery without delay.' Cecilia's (T) verbalizations reveal a feeling that is quite common among the participants, namely that there is less direct address in Swedish than in French. Cecilia (T) explicitly says that the standard in contemporary Swedish is the T form *du*. However, in her revised translation, she retains *ni*. Her decision to write lowercase V and the rewording of the above sentence to get rid of several instances of direct address could be regarded as an attempt to adapt her text to the Swedish audience while trying to respect the fundamental decisions of the source-text author. It should also be mentioned in this regard that in subtitles — subtitles being one of the most frequently, if not the most frequently read type of text in Sweden — the V form is generally written in lowercase, probably to facilitate reading. Indeed, since capitalization is not part of the Swedish language except for obvious cases such as proper nouns, capital V forms stand out of the text flow and may hinder smooth reading (Ivarsson & Carroll 1998).

Finally, let us look at Oscar's (T) TAP, one of three participants in the revision task to replace V by T, albeit not entirely consistently:

[12] Oscar (T)

one thing that / strikes me immediately here is that they write *Ni* [=V] and *Er* [=V] with capitals and at least I think that this is only disturbing in this translation / I actually want to get rid of it um I can check in the Swedish writing rules but I mean capitalized *Ni* [=V] is excessively polite in Swedish and I think that it gets / a bit too much of this whole academic *Ni* [=V] and *Er* [=V] almost several times in every sentence and these capitals are only disturbing / um / and yeah: / I don't think I want to have capitals

[13] Oscar (T)

I wonder if one should not simply and brutally replace *Ni* [=V] with *du* [=T] / even Swedish authorities address Swedes with *du* [=T] / one should actually / adapt such a text to the target culture / I am going to check again under *ni* [=V] and *du* [=T] (he consults the Swedish writing rules) (reads:) the Swedish language council does not comment on the use of *ni* [=V] and *du* [=T] / no of course not / (reads:) always write lowercase *du* [=T] / (he sighs) I decide to replace all *Ni* [=V] with *du* [=T] / it's more natural it's so incredibly pompous otherwise

[14] Oscar (T)

I'll just go through it once again to check if I always use the same address forms

The TAP excerpts above illustrate that the problem of finding the appropriate address pronoun may be present in all phases of the translation or revision process. Excerpt [12] shows that after having read the source text and the draft translation once, Oscar (T) hesitates between lowercase and uppercase V. Then, during the main evaluation phase (excerpt [13]), he considers replacing V with T. Finally, he dedicates an entire reading phase in the end just to check whether he has systematically used the T form and lowercase (excerpt [14]), with one exception: an occurrence of the French *vous* that indeed indicates plural reference.

Excerpt [13] also illustrates that at one point Oscar (T) consults the Swedish writing rules (*Svenska skrivregler* 2000). He expresses his disappointment that they do not offer him any help with the choice of either V or T. But this type of help would be available in a grammar. The Swedish Academy published a comprehensive grammar of modern Swedish in 1999 (Teleman *et al.* 1999). The foreword explicitly states that the grammar is thought to be of help for translators translating from and into Swedish, guiding them in specific linguistic questions. It does indeed offer recommendations and evaluations regarding style, variation and language use. It also includes an interesting overview of the development of the second-person pronoun in Swedish (Teleman *et al.* 1999: 266–70), which could help translators in their decision-making process. However, none of the participants in the TAP studies consulted a grammar during the execution of the different translation or translation revision tasks.

All in all, Oscar's (T) reaction towards *Ni* is a further clear illustration of the fact that the Swedish V form is often associated with distance, excessive politeness,

snobbishness, and that its use remains clearly marked — even in service encounters and business situations, where, to some extent, it has come into use again.

4. Summary and conclusions

This paper presented data from a translation task and from a translation revision task to investigate the extent to which diverging address practice in French and Swedish constitutes a translation problem. In the translation task, the majority of the participating translators (5 out of 6) rendered the unmarked V in the French source text consistently with the unmarked T in the Swedish target text and thus revealed themselves, on the whole, more target-oriented. The trainee translators, on the other hand, turned out to be more source-oriented, with 2 out of 4 opting for the marked V form *ni/Ni*.

In the translation revision task, however, the majority of the participating translators adopted a source-oriented approach, probably as a result of the original translator's decision to render the French V by the Swedish V in the draft translation to be revised. The Swedish draft translation follows the whole French source text very closely from a structural point of view. The result is numerous calques and even ungrammaticalities. These were often detected and removed by the translators. One possible explanation for the fact that they opted, to a larger extent, for the V form in the revision task could therefore be a feeling of being unable to justify a shift from V to T. The TAP analyses lend some empirical support to this hypothesis, as they contain numerous indicators of the translators' uncertainty, with participants trying different solutions in different phases of the translation process. Diverging address practice in French and Swedish appears to constitute a problem even for experienced translators. Moreover, the participants' spontaneous negative reaction towards the Swedish V form, even among trainees and translators who decided to maintain V after all, further highlights the fact that contemporary Swedish still lacks a V form able to be used with the same function as the French *vous*.

Perhaps the fact that 5 out of 10 participants use lower-case *ni* in the translation revision task can at least partly be explained by the presence of two instances of *vous* in the French source text that indicate plural reference. These participants might thus have interpreted the French V form as plural *vous* throughout. On the other hand, 3 out of 10 participants decided to replace *Ni* with *du*, perhaps to avoid the correspondence between the informal second-person plural form with the homophonous, marked V form. Plural reference would also be unexpected from the point of view of the target language. In Swedish, the singular T form *du* has been the standard in advertising texts for more than 25 years (Nowak & Andrén 1981:46–7, 119).

Perhaps the uncertainty that appeared in both the product and process data could, to some extent, be addressed in translator training. In an interview study conducted by Norrby (2004: 32), Swedish participants state that they learn a lot about address practice in French, German and Spanish — which all have two coexisting address systems with either unmarked T or V — in foreign language courses, but hardly anything about address practice in Swedish, their native language. The think-aloud data presented in this paper reveal that not all translators are aware of the help they could get from the recommendations issued by the Swedish language council when it comes to the uppercase and lowercase distinction of address forms, nor from reference grammars, which might have been useful to them in their decision making regarding T and V.

It is possible that the translation of the French *V vous* by the Swedish *ni* is a prototypical feature of translated language. In subtitling, for example, it is very common that the French *vous* and the German *Sie* are rendered by *ni*, although *V* would not be employed in the same situation in Sweden. These instances of *V* can thus be considered an example of Swedish translationese. Its appearance is even more striking in the translation of US American movies, where direct address is often rendered by *V* even when no titles such as *Sir* or *Madam*, let alone military or academic titles, are used. A difference in age or a more formal context such as a work situation often appear to be a sufficient motive for the Swedish subtitler to employ *ni*. Tellander (2004) has recently shown that in German–Swedish movie translation, subtitlers often follow German address practice in their Swedish translation. They seem to do so both to give the audience a feeling of the language use in the source culture and because the audience hears the source language while reading the subtitles in the target language; in other words, the audience is aware of the use of titles and the *V* form in the original dialogues if it has some knowledge of the source language, which is often the case. For the same reason, subtitlers often refrain more generally from detaching themselves too far from source-language structures. There seems to be a higher degree of permissible freedom in translation proper where the target audience as a rule does not read the translation side by side with the original.

The think-aloud protocols have turned out to be a useful tool for shedding light on the challenge involved in finding the appropriate address pronoun. If we discover evidence of inconsistent address practice in a written translation, it is tempting to consider it as a manifestation of a mere typing error. The TAPs, however, reveal that inconsistent use of lowercase or uppercase T or V on the one hand, and of T and V on the other, is often the manifestation of an underlying uncertainty, with participants trying different potential solutions in different phases of the translation process. Think-aloud protocols can thus be used to identify or explain

many other language-pair related sociolinguistic translation problems that may have gone unnoticed so far.

References

- Brown, Roger & Gilman, Albert. 1960. The pronouns of power and solidarity. In Thomas A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language*, pp. 253–76. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT.
- Charaudeau, Patrick. 1992. *Grammaire du sens et de l'expression*. Paris: Hachette. 927 pages.
- Clyne, Michael, Kretzenbacher, Heinz-Leo, Norrby, Catrin, and Doris Schüpbach. 2006. Perceptions of variation and change in German and Swedish address. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 10(3), 287–319.
- Coffen, Béatrice. 2002. *Histoire culturelle des pronoms d'adresse*. Paris: Champion. 319 pages.
- Englund Dimitrova, Birgitta. 2005. *Expertise and explicitation in the translation process*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. xv + 295 pages.
- Engwall, Gunnel. 2005. Dialogue et traduction: Le cas de *Créanciers*. In Michael Metzeltin (Ed.), *Hommage à Jane Nystedt* (pp. 65–91). Vienna: 3 Eidechsen.
- Engwall, Gunnel. 2006. *Tu, vous ou il: Les formes d'adresse dans Mademoiselle Julie*. In Irma Taavitsainen, Juhani Härmä & Jarmo Korhonen (Eds.), *Dialogic language use* (pp. 399–413). Helsinki: Société Néophilologique.
- Fasold, Ralph. 1990. *The sociolinguistics of language*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell. 352 pages.
- Ivarsson, Jan & Carroll, Mary. 1998. *Subtitling*. Simrishamn: TransEdit. xii + 185 pages.
- Jääskeläinen, Riitta. 1999. *Tapping the process: An exploratory study of the cognitive and affective factors involved in translating* (University of Joensuu Publications in the Humanities No. 22). Joensuu: University of Joensuu. vi + 268 pages.
- Krings, Hans P. 1986. *Was in den Köpfen von Übersetzern vorgeht. Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Struktur des Übersetzungsprozesses an fortgeschrittenen Französischlernern*. Tübingen: Narr. 570 pages.
- Künzli, Alexander. 2003. *Quelques stratégies et principes en traduction technique français-allemand et français-suédois* (Cahiers de la recherche No. 21). Stockholm: Stockholm University, Department of French, Italian, and Classical Languages (www.diva-portal.org). 265 pages.
- Mossop, Brian. 2001. *Revising and editing for translators*. Manchester: St. Jerome. xviii + 177 pages.
- Norrby, Catrin. 2004. Unga och gamla vill inte nia [young and old people do not want to say ni]. *Språkvård*, 4, 26–34.
- Norrby, Catrin & Håkansson, Gisela. 2003. “Kan jag hjälpa dig med något?” Om tilltal i en servicesituation [“Can I help dig with something?” Address forms in a service situation]. *Språk och stil*, 13, 5–34.
- Nowak, Kjell & Andrén, Gunnar. 1981. *Reklam och samhällsförändring. Variation och konstans i svenska populärpressannonser 1950–1975* [Advertising and societal change. Variation and constancy in Swedish popular press adds 1950–1975]. Lund: Studentlitteratur. 198 pages.
- Riegel, Martin, Pellat, Jean-Christophe & Rioul, René. 1999. *Grammaire méthodique du français*. Paris: PUF. xix + 646 pages.

- Svenska skrivregler [Swedish writing rules] (2nd ed.). 2000. Stockholm: Svenska språknämnden and Liber. 220 pages.
- Teleman, Ulf, Hellberg, Staffan & Andersson, Erik (Eds.). 1999. *Svenska Akademiens grammatik. 2, ord* [The Swedish Academy Grammar. Vol. 2, words]. Stockholm: Nordstedts ordbok. 768 pages.
- Tellander, Sara. 2004. *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin. En analys av modalpartiklar, tilltal och filmöversättningsproblem i den svenska översättningen* [Der Krieger und die Kaiserin. An analysis of modal particles, address, and movie translation problems in Swedish translation] (Unpublished master's thesis). Stockholm: Stockholm University, Institute for Interpretation and Translation Studies. 41 pages.
- Trandem, Beate. 2005. *Discours sur le vif. Étude du processus de traduction des animismes du français en norvégien* (Acta Humaniora No. 219). Oslo: Faculty of History and Philosophy, University of Oslo. 298 pages.
- Widmark, Gun. 1993. Ni i stilartsperspektiv [Ni from the perspective of stylistics]. *Språk och stil*, 3, 206–9.

Abstract

The choice of the appropriate address pronoun is notoriously difficult in spoken and written communication. In French, there are two parallel address systems, with either unmarked T (*tu*) or V (*vous*). In Swedish, on the other hand, the T form *du* has been the general, usual form since the 1960s. In recent years, V (*ni*) has started to reappear, at least in service and business situations. The choice of the appropriate address pronoun may thus constitute a problem in French–Swedish translation.

Process and product data were collected with 20 trainee translators and professional translators who were asked to translate a text or revise a draft translation respectively, while thinking aloud. The analysis of the Swedish target texts reveals both interindividual variation in the choice of the address pronoun, and intraindividual variation, with several participants showing inconsistent address use. Process data from the think-aloud protocols highlight the effort even experienced translators invest in finding the appropriate address pronoun.

Résumé

La difficulté relative au choix du pronom d'adresse approprié dans la communication orale et écrite est notoire. En français, il existe deux systèmes d'adresse parallèles, soit avec T (*tu*), soit avec V (*vous*), tous deux non marqués. En suédois, en revanche, la forme T *du* est la forme généralement utilisée depuis les années 1960. Plus récemment, V (*ni*) a commencé à réapparaître, du moins dans le monde des services et des affaires. Le choix du pronom d'adresse approprié peut donc constituer un problème dans la traduction français-suédois.

Le présent article se base sur les données récoltées lors d'une étude menée avec 20 étudiants en traduction et traducteurs professionnels, invités respectivement à traduire un texte ou à réviser une première traduction en pensant à haute voix. L'analyse des textes d'arrivée en suédois

fait apparaître à la fois des variations interindividuelles dans le choix du pronom d'adresse, et des variations intraindividuelles, plusieurs participants témoignant d'une utilisation incohérente de ces pronoms. Les données issues des protocoles de verbalisation soulignent l'effort que même les traducteurs expérimentés fournissent pour trouver le pronom d'adresse approprié.

About the author

Alexander Künzli has a master's degree in translation studies and psychology from Geneva University and a PhD in French Linguistics from Stockholm University. He is a lecturer in the Institute of Translation and Interpreting at Zürich University of Applied Sciences. Current academic interests include translation competence acquisition, audiovisual translation and subtitling, and translating and interpreting (in) the Caribbean. www.alexander-kuenzli.zhaw.ch

Address: Institute of Translation and Interpreting at Zürich University of Applied Sciences, P.O. Box, CH-8401 Winterthur, Switzerland.

E-mail: alexander.kunzli@zhaw.ch

La Collection Unesco a pour but de contribuer à l'appréciation mutuelle des cultures par une aide à la traduction, à la publication et à la diffusion d'œuvres littéraires écrites dans des langues de diffusion restreinte. Créée en 1948, elle compte maintenant quelque 1000 titres représentant environ 80 littératures différentes.

Pour tout renseignement:

Collection Unesco d'œuvres représentatives

Division éditoriale et des droits

Editions UNESCO 1, rue Miollis

75732 Paris Cedex 15

France

Fax: +33 (0)1 45 68 57 2

E-mail: publishing.promotion@unesco.org

<http://www.unesco.org/publications>