'HIER IM GROSSEN INTERNETZ, WO SICH ALLE DUDUDUZEN': INTERNET DISCOURSE POLITYNESS AND GERMAN ADDRESS

In German-speaking weblogs, popular e-journals and IR chat groups, a vivid debate is going on about appropriate German terms of address both in web-based communication itself and communication in other media. This debate reflects the generally high degree of awareness of problems in addressing interlocutors in German.

This study is set against the background of the discourse politeness theory, as developed by Usami who examines politeness phenomena at both sentence and discourse levels. Based on the theoretical framework of the larger Melbourne study of address in some European languages, it compares the web debate with the data from German-speaking focus groups and surveys gained within the Melbourne address study.

Web literate German speakers show a high degree of awareness of possible manipulative uses of the German T pronoun. The internet is discussed as a "different country" and web-based communication as tending towards intercultural communication, with all the consequences of discourse politeness.

Reference: