VARIATION IN SWEDISH ADDRESS PRACTICES

This paper explores variation in address in contemporary Swedish in both Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish. The research is part of a large-scale Australian project on changes in the address systems of French, German and Swedish. The present paper focuses on results from 72 social network interviews conducted in Sweden (Gothenburg) and Finland (Vaasa). Both quantitative results (questionnaire part) and qualitative results (interview part) are presented.

The findings suggest that the V pronoun of address – *ni* – is gradually disappearing in both national varieties. This tendency is clearly stronger in Sweden-Swedish; in spoken Sweden-Swedish V hardly exists any more, except for a controversial re-entry in communication between the young and middle-aged and the very old in service encounters (cf Mårtensson 1986). In such encounters there is substantial variation between the intention of the speaker and the interpretation of the hearer. Furthermore the results indicate that there is considerable variation between written (impersonal) and spoken Sweden-Swedish with a much higher acceptance for the V pronoun in written, impersonal contexts.

The study demonstrates that national variation is significant with much more use of V in Finland-Swedish where it relates to a different set of variation rules.

References:


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