Changing Addressing Cultures in Finnish and French: usage of first name in commercial and media contexts

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This paper discusses the use of the first names in Finnish and French. Although the Finnish address culture can be characterized as informal and T forms are favored, first names are rarely used in interaction, even in multi-party conversations. In French, first names are used more widely with acquaintances and can be accompanied both with T and V forms, whereas in Finnish, they are used almost exclusively with T forms, except for some deviating examples found in the recent media data.

Currently address practices are changing. In Finnish, we have found examples of address with first names especially in commercial contexts (e.g. telephone marketing and certain service encounters), and in both traditional and social media. In French, first names are used with V forms when addressing customers, and with T forms when addressing people in social media, even if the customers and the Internet surfers do not know each other.

In our presentation, we will consider the following questions:

- In what kinds of situations and interactional functions are first names used?
- What kinds of attitudes are related to their usage in these contexts?
- What is the relationship between the use of first names and T/V forms?
- How do the Finnish and French practices differ from each other?

Our analysis focuses, on one hand, on addressing practices in the American coffee house chain Starbucks as well as attitudes towards them, and, on the other hand, on the use of first names in media discourse (e.g. Facebook). Our perspective can be described as interactionally oriented sociolinguistics.

Keywords: attitudes, first names, addressing.