

Article

Metalinguistic Commentary on Forms of Address in a Finnish Autobiographical Novel Series

Hanna Lappalainen ^{1,*}  and Maija Saviniemi ² 

¹ School of Humanities, Finnish and Cultural Studies, University of Eastern Finland, P.O. Box 111, 80101 Joensuu, Finland

² Faculty of Humanities, Finnish Language, University of Oulu, 90570 Oulu, Finland; maija.saviniemi@oulu.fi

* Correspondence: hanna.lappalainen@uef.fi

Abstract: This article examines the metalinguistic commentary on address practices in a Finnish autobiographical novel series, the 26-volume *Iijoki-sarja* 'Iijoki Series' (1971–1998) by Kalle Päätalo. Our aim is to show how the forms of address affect the protagonist and other characters. The study is anchored in previous sociopragmatic research on address and in folk linguistics. The analysis is based on searches in the digital corpus of the whole series by means of keywords related to forms of address. The analysis proceeds chronologically, from Kalle's childhood and adolescence to his marriage and working life, including his social rise from a poor country boy to a full-time novel writer. Our results show that Kalle, the fictional protagonist of the series, mirrors his own and others' choices in address practices throughout his life against the norms he has learned in his childhood. These choices are explained by the (relative) age, sex, status and regional background of the interlocutors. Metalinguistic comments reflect the characters' social relations and changes in them during the protagonist's linguistic biography. We argue that fiction can open up perceptions and contexts related to address practices that are not easily accessible by other methods or datasets.

Keywords: forms of address; metalanguage; fiction; perception; linguistic biography



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1. Introduction

Fiction has become one of the traditional objects of address research (e.g., Nischik 1997). Previous studies have focused, for example, on how forms of address have been translated from one language to another (e.g., Ethelb 2015; Kluge 2019). In addition to the dialogues in fiction, which provide an opportunity to examine the use of forms of address in the narrative world, novels sometimes include comments on addressing and its norms. By this means it is possible to show how address practices are perceived and valued by the narrator and (other) characters in the novel.

Our aim in this article is to examine metalinguistic comments on address practices in a large autobiographical novel series (1971–1998) (see also Lappalainen and Saviniemi 2023). The object of study is the 26-volume *Iijoki-sarja* 'Iijoki Series' by the Finnish author Kalle Päätalo (1919–2000). The series describes in detail the life of the protagonist, Kalle, from his early childhood to his retirement years, and his social rise from a poor country boy to a construction foreman and later a successful author (Keskimaa 2018a). However, the novel series depicts not only the social rise of one fictional person but also the broader transformation of Finnish society, from the rural communities of the early 20th century to an urbanizing society. Like Keskimaa (2018a), who has explored the metalanguage of the *Iijoki Series* in her dissertation, we regard the series as a linguistic biography in which the narrator describes his life events through his linguistic repertoire and language-related experiences and perceptions (for linguistic biography, see Section 1.2). We are interested in how the choices of the forms of address and the impact of the choices on the protagonist are portrayed as a part of the various stages of his life in this fictional data. We aim to answer the following questions:

1. How are address practices commented on in the *Iijoki Series* as part of the protagonist's linguistic biography?
2. How are these practices justified by the narrator and other characters in the series?

The *Iijoki Series* is a particularly suitable subject for examining metalinguistic commentary on address practices, since the practices are commented on frequently throughout the series. Thus, we can see how forms of address are perceived by characters, how others' choices of the forms affect them in different contexts and how they reflect their own choices.

Our analysis is based on searches of the digital corpus of the whole series by means of keywords related to forms of address that are both pronominal and nominal (see Section 2.2). The study is grounded in previous sociopragmatic research on address (e.g., [Clyne et al. 2009](#)) and in folk linguistics (e.g., [Preston 1989](#); [Niedzielski and Preston 2000](#)). These perspectives arise from the fact that we focus on the perceptions of non-linguists (through fiction) and their metalinguistic comments revealing the relevance of social and pragmatic variables and the part they play in explaining the choices of forms of address. Our aim is not only to complement the previous research focusing on Kalle Päätalo's *Iijoki Series* (see [Ylönen 2013](#); [Keskimaa 2018a](#); [Saviniemi 2022](#)) and Finnish address patterns (e.g., [Yli-Vakkuri 2005](#); [Isosävi and Lappalainen 2015](#); [Wide et al. 2019](#); [Isosävi and Vecsernyés 2022](#)), but also to show that the analysis of literary texts can provide new insights for the analysis of how the choices of forms of address affect an addressee. We will argue that metalinguistic comments which verbalize characters' perceptions of address practices reflect the characters' social relations and also the development and changes in these relationships. In addition, the comments will shed light on the social norms of the period during which the events of the novel series have been set.

1.1. Forms of Address in Finnish

The difference in Finnish between informal T forms and formal V forms of address is essential. T/V opposition (see [Brown and Gilman 1960](#)) is expressed in terms of second-person pronouns (*sinä* vs. *te* and their dialectal variants), verb inflection (*laula-t* 'sing-SG2' vs. *laula-tte* 'sing-PL2'), and possessive suffixes (*kirja-si* 'book-POSS.SG2' vs. *kirja-nne* 'book-POSS.PL2'). In spoken language, address is often expressed redundantly by using both pronouns and inflected verb forms (*sinä laula-t* 'you(T) sing-SG2', *te laula-tte* 'you(V) sing-PL2').

In addition to direct address with T and V forms, third-person singular forms and other indirect forms (e.g., passive forms) are frequently used in Finnish ([Yli-Vakkuri 2005](#)). In many cases, these implicit forms are used to avoid a choice between T and V forms. Third person forms involve referring to the addressee by a pronoun, name, endearment, title, etc. However, nominal address, such as the use of titles, is not common in Finnish when addressing someone directly in the second person ([Havu et al. 2014](#)).

In the period that the novel series primarily describes, V forms and other formal forms of address were more common than they are nowadays ([Paunonen 2010](#)). In present-day Finland, informal T forms of address predominate and titles are only used in some ceremonial situations ([Yli-Vakkuri 2005](#); [Lappalainen 2015](#); [Lappalainen and Vecsernyés 2023](#)). In contrast, in the first half of the 20th century, V forms were used self-evidently when addressing older people or people in more elevated positions, including family members, and formal titles were more favoured than they are nowadays ([Yli-Vakkuri 2005](#); [Paunonen 2010](#)).

1.2. Linguistic Biography, Metalanguage, and Perception

Our article draws on three concepts used in sociolinguistic research: *linguistic biography*, *metalanguage*, and *perception*. When focusing on a linguistic biography, the starting point is to examine the life events of an individual through his or her linguistic repertoire and language-related experiences, memories and perceptions ([Pavlenko 2007](#); [Busch 2018](#)). In previous sociolinguistic research, linguistic biographies have been analysed using interviews, writings, diaries or drawings, or by combining a variety of materials (e.g.,

Pavlenko 2007; Busch 2018; Hippi et al. 2020; Lönnroth 2023). Research on linguistic biographies opens up perspectives on the subjective positioning, language attitudes, emotions and identity constructions of individuals (Busch 2017, p. 46). Linguistic narratives have been used especially for exploring multilingualism and language learning (Pavlenko 2007; Pietikäinen 2012; Busch 2017, 2018), but this approach is also suitable for examining fiction, especially the *Iijoki Series*, as Keskimaa (2018a) has shown in her dissertation. Keskimaa has analysed the *Iijoki Series* as a linguistic biography of the main character by focusing on its metalanguage in terms of its dialects, language ideologies, and stance-taking (see also Keskimaa 2022). Our study complements her research in terms of forms of address, since Keskimaa has made only a few isolated remarks concerning forms of address in the series of novels (see Keskimaa 2018b). Like Keskimaa (2018a, pp. 47–48), we use a linguistic biography by referring to the ways in which the narrator considers his life events through his linguistic repertoire and also through his experiences and memories, together forming a picture of his reality.

When we speak of perceptions, we mean the findings that ordinary language users make about language variation and the beliefs they have about variation (Preston 1989, p. 2). In order to comment on variation, language users must be aware of it. Not all linguistic features of language are equally accessible to ordinary speakers, but the forms of address have been used as an example of a feature that non-linguists are aware of (Niedzielski and Preston 2000, pp. 10–11), which in turn makes them a fruitful object of study.

Perceptions of address practices can be studied in different data and with various methods, such as interviews, surveys and experiments (e.g., Clyne et al. 2009; Lappalainen 2019; de Hoop et al. 2023). In the case of this study we approach perceptions through fiction by analysing metalinguistic comments on addressing. Because metalanguage, “language about language” (Niedzielski and Preston 2000, p. 302), is not usually focused on in fiction, it can be considered to be meaningful for the interpretation of the novel. The comments orient the reader’s attention to the language itself and make prevailing norms visible, offering guidelines for interpretation to the novel’s readers and directing them to pay attention to the use of language itself (see Lucy 1993, pp. 9–11; Keskimaa 2013, p. 502).

Perceptions of addressing are difficult to study through authentic interaction, since it is exceptional for the person being addressed to directly suggest whether (s)he finds the address unpleasant or offensive (cf. Haugh 2010, p. 155). In fiction, in contrast, the narrator does not need to hide their true feelings, they can reveal what is on their mind and what is not said out loud in the interaction.

The *Iijoki Series* has been written entirely from the point of view of the protagonist, Kalle. Comments on addressing occur both in the narration and in the dialogue. In most cases, the comments are concerned with situations where Kalle himself is one of the participants in the interaction. In these cases, we have direct access to Kalle’s perceptions and interpretations of the situation. There are also some situations in which he is observing interactions amongst other characters, and access to their perceptions of forms of address is opened up through dialogues in which unsuccessful choices are explicitly commented on in the discussion (see Extract (3)).

2. Materials and Methods

This section is devoted primarily to introducing the literary works produced by the author Kalle Päätalo and to describing the stages in the life of the fictitious protagonist Kalle. Subsequently, we discuss the *Iijoki Series* as a text corpus and present the corpus searches that we have made in order to locate the passages in which forms of address have been commented on.

2.1. Stages in the Life of the Protagonist

Kaarlo Alvar “Kalle” Päätalo (1919–2000) was a Finnish forestry worker and builder who became a novelist. He published 44 books (39 novels, three collections of short stories, one play and one illustrated book) in the course of 1958–2001. In his main work, contained

in the autobiographical *Iijoki Series* (1971–1998), Päätaalo writes as a first-person narrator about the characters, events and landscapes of his life (Rajala 1987). He was one of the most popular Finnish authors in Finland in the 20th century, and his novels were read especially by ordinary Finns—and also by Finns who might not otherwise have read books at all. By the time of his death, as many as 3.6 million copies of his books had been printed (Saviniemi and Mantila 2022, p. 9). For comparison, in the year 2000, the population of Finland was approximately 5.2 million. Rajala (1987) even considers Päätaalo to be the most successful Finnish author. Critics have, however, often been quite critical of his works, and only a handful of his books have been translated for an international readership.¹

The biography of the protagonist, Kalle, is quite similar to that of the author Kalle Päätaalo himself (Table 1; for further detail, see Ylönen 2013, pp. 419–28; Keskimaa 2018a, p. 23). Although the lives of the author Kalle Päätaalo and the fictional Kalle seem to be quite alike, we have no access to the reality. In consequence, we can only comment on the fictional life of the protagonist. This also concerns the use and comments related to address practices. When referring to the protagonist, we will use the first name *Kalle* and when we mean the author Kalle Päätaalo, the name form *Kalle Päätaalo* or *Päätaalo* will be used.

Table 1. Principal events in the life of the protagonist, Kalle.

Main Events and Years
Childhood, 1919–1933
Youth, 1933–1939
War years, 1939–1944
First marriage to Laina Päätaalo and his move to the Tampere region, 1944
Studying to become a construction foreman in Tampere, 1947–1949
Moving back to Taivalkoski and back to Tampere, 1951–1952
Becoming the father of an illegitimate child, 1954
Divorce from Laina Päätaalo and second marriage to Leena Päätaalo, 1955
Becoming the father of two daughters, 1956 and 1959
Becoming a novelist, 1958
Becoming a full-time writer, 1963

Kalle was born in 1919 and raised in a small town called Taivalkoski in the north-eastern part of Finland. He was the second eldest of eight children. He studied at a primary school for five years in 1928–1933 in Taivalkoski, but he had no opportunity to study further for any occupation before his military service. His father was a lumberjack who suffered from periodical mental disorders, which caused the family financial problems. Hence, from the age of 14, Kalle had to maintain his family, for instance, by means of timber rafting and logging. He volunteered for the army in 1939 at the start of the Second World War, and after the war and five years of military service (1939–1944), he married and moved with his wife Laina to the Tampere area.

In the post-war years, Kalle worked mainly on construction sites as a handyman, before studying for two years at technical school to become a construction worker. His new occupation as a construction foreman facilitated the start of his social rise. In the early 1950s, he returned with his wife to his hometown of Taivalkoski and worked there as a construction foreman. Less than two years later, they moved back to the city of Tampere. After he fathered an illegitimate child, Kalle and his first wife divorced in 1955, and at around the same time, he met Leena and remarried. In the 1950s he and his second wife became the parents of two daughters. At this point in his life, Kalle wrote a first novel about a building site in Tampere; the novel was published in 1958 and he became a full-time writer in 1963.

2.2. The *Iijoki Series* as a Text Corpus

Kalle Päätaalo's main work, the *Iijoki Series* (1971–1998), is one of the longest autobiographical works ever written. Päätaalo writes about his life in this novel series in a highly detailed way. From the perspective of a single, fictional individual, Kalle, the events in

the *Iijoki Series* span a period of about 70 years, but they especially describe the period spanning the 1920s to the 1950s. Central to the story is the tension between Kalle's home region, the northern countryside (especially the town of Taivalkoski), and his later place of residence, an industrial city (Tampere) in southern Finland. The series tells the story of the protagonist Kalle, but there are other, more extensive stories included in it: in all, it has more than 1 800 minor characters (Ylönen 2013, p. 271).

Our data covers the entire *Iijoki Series*, comprising 26 novels, some 17,000 pages, 494,614 sentences, and 5,280,750 tokens. The electronic corpus of the whole series has made it possible to systematically analyse this extensive data. The corpus, maintained in the Language Bank of Finland, has been freely available to researchers since 2019.

This study represents corpus-based research (see, e.g., Tognini-Bonelli 2001, p. 65) in which corpus tools have only been used in the keyword searches. Subsequently, we discuss the *Iijoki Series* as a text corpus and present the corpus searches we have made in order to locate the passages in which forms of address have been commented on.

The analysis is based on corpus searches for 10 keywords (see Table 2). We obtained over 1400 hits, but some of them were irrelevant from the perspective of our research topic. We went through all of the search results manually and removed the irrelevant cases. This left a total of 726 relevant cases.

Table 2. Search terms and their frequencies in the corpus.

Search Term	N
<i>etunimi</i> 'first name'	78
<i>herroitella</i> ~ <i>herrotella</i> 'to address as Sir'	13
<i>puhutella</i> 'to address'	308
<i>puhuttelu</i> 'addressing'	37
<i>rouvitella</i> 'to address as Madam'	1
<i>sinutella</i> 'to address with T forms'	126
<i>sinuttelu</i> 'the use of T forms'	18
<i>sukunimi</i> 'surname'	29
<i>teititellä</i> 'to address with V forms'	97
<i>teitittely</i> 'the use of V forms'	19

The metalinguistic comments have been analysed qualitatively, within the wider context encompassing the concordance lines, and by classifying them into several categories based, on the one hand, on the forms of address (T vs. V forms, the use of nominal forms) that they comment on and, on the other hand, on the social and situational factors (e.g., age, gender, power relations) mentioned in the justifications of the choice of the form. Our analysis revealed some trends that we aim to illustrate using a number of representative examples in the following section.

3. Results

The present section consists of an analysis of the selected examples to illustrate how address practices are commented on at different stages in Kalle's life; a further aim will be to highlight the social and situational factors underlying the chosen forms of address. In most cases, these factors will be explicitly commented on. The analysis will proceed chronologically, from Kalle's childhood to his adulthood.

3.1. Childhood and Adolescence

Our first example comes from Kalle's childhood in the 1920s, when Kalle is around four years of age and lives in his home village, Taivalkoski. He is visiting an elderly neighbour whom he has stayed with over a long period of time; here, a neighbour is growing tired of Kalle, who repeatedly asks questions. At this point the neighbour also criticizes Kalle for his inappropriate manner of address. It is more common in the *Iijoki Series* that the narrator comments on the unexpected forms of address, but in this specific case it is natural that the

addressee expresses her irritation directly to the interlocutor, since adults have the power to remind children of what constitutes good manners.

(1)

–Selevitäppä taas sitä kun olit Ruijassa kalalla!

–En selevitä! Silittiinkää. . . Eläkä sinä yhtenään inkuta ja kysele! Muuvvanhi aina on tutteeraamassa täysi-ikäsilta ihmisiltä. . . Ja pittää olla ihme, ettei se Riitu opeta sulle miten puhutellaan vanahoja ihmisiä. Sannoo sinuksi kun vertaisijaan. . .

Monta kertaa äiti samoin kuin isä ovat iskostaneet tätä tapaa mieleeni. Useat kerrat äiti on pyöräyttänyt minua tukasta kun vieras, jota olen erehtynyt puhuttelemaan sinuksi, on sulkenut perässään oven. Päätän korjata puheeni ja sanon:

–Pulukallako ne lappalaiset teitä kuskasi kun kulitta Ruijassa?

–Tell[T] me again about the time you[T] were fishing in Ruija!

–I won't! Don't[T] keep on talking and asking questions. You're always disturbing adults with all sorts of questions. How strange that Riitu hasn't taught you how to speak to old people. You address them with *sinä* ['you T'] forms as if they were your peers.

My mother and also my father have instilled this habit in my mind. My mother has pulled my hair several times when a stranger, whom I have mistakenly addressed as *sinä* ['you T'], has closed the door. I decide to correct my speech and say:

–Did the Lapps carry you[V] with a sledge when you[V] were wandering in Ruija?

(Huonemiehen poika 1971)

At the beginning of the extract Kalle uses T forms, as can be seen in his use of verb inflections (*kerro* 'tell.IMP2.SG2', *ol-i-t* 'be-PST-SG2'). Following the neighbour's rebuke, the narrator comments on the situation by pointing out that the neighbour has formulated the general norm: in the Finnish society of the 1920s, children were not permitted to address older people using T forms. The norm violation is not entirely blamed on Kalle, since Kalle's mother Riitu is held responsible: *Ja pittää olla ihme, ettei se Riitu opeta sulle miten puhutellaan vanahoja ihmisiä*. 'How strange that Riitu hasn't taught you how to speak to old people.' In more recent times, this norm of addressing has, to some extent, changed in Finland. A majority of Finns still think that elderly people should be addressed using V-forms, but the norm no longer extends to small children nor to relationships between acquaintances such as close neighbours (Hippi and Lappalainen 2020). The concluding part of the extract, however, shows that Kalle knows how to address according to conventional expectations. The use of V forms is visible in both the pronoun (*tei-tä* 'you(V)-PART') and the verb inflection (*kul-i-tta* 'go-PST-PL2').

In adolescence, Kalle joins the army and corresponds with several girls. Because of the war, his military service lasts for years. In the army, Kalle experiences difficulty in learning formal address patterns in connection with military titles and their complex rules. In romantic relationships, the way in which he addresses girls reflects his emotional attitude to them (see also Lappalainen and Saviniemi 2023, pp. 155–56). The following example describes a situation in which Kalle has been hospitalized after being wounded in the war. In the hospital he talks with other patients, doctors, nurses, and "Lottas". (Lottas were members of the women's voluntary paramilitary service organization, Lotta Svärd, and served in many kinds of auxiliary roles, such as in hospitals and at air raid warning posts during the Second World War.) In the dialogues preceding the example, at the beginning of his treatment, Kalle is addressed with V forms or indirectly in the third person. However, the situation changes as his condition improves and he is able to communicate more with others.

(2)

Kun haavakuumeeni hellitti, aloin yhä nopeammassa tahdissa tulla tutuiksi vanhojen potilaitten samoin kuin hoitohenkilökunnan kanssa.

Olin luokan nuorin potilas. Varmaan tästä syystä lotat ja Punaisen Ristin Hilikka olivat alkaneet kutsua minua etunimeltä ja sanoa sinuksi. Hilkan siirtymistä sinutteluun oli tosin edeltänyt hienovarainen "ottaa nyt", "maistaa edes" -muotojen käyttö. Hilikka ja Annikka minunkin oli helppo sinutella. Elinaa sain juuri ja juuri kutsutuksi etunimeltään, sinuksi sanomista kuitenkin kiersin. Sairaanhoidajia teitittelin, vieläpä arasti, ja heitä teitittelivät muutkin luokan potilaat—vänrikkiä ehkä lukuun ottamatta. Koska minut poisjättäen nuorimmatkin potilaistamme lähentelivät kolmeakymmentä—vedossa makaava uskovainen kersantti oli jo jonkin vuoden päälle neljänkymmenen—kutsuivat kaikki kaverini lottia ja Hilikka etunimeltä tai sinuksi. Nämä taas teitittelivät kaikkia itseään vanhempia.

As my post-surgical temperature subsided, I started increasingly to get to know patients who had arrived earlier as well as the nursing staff.

I was the youngest patient in the class.² Probably for this reason, the Lottas and Hilikka from the Red Cross had started calling me by my first name and addressing me as *sinä* [T]. Hilikka's switch to *sinä* had been preceded, however, by a subtle use of the forms "(he) takes it now", "(he) tastes a bit". It was easy for me to address Hilikka and Annikki with T forms. I could scarcely call Elina by her first name, but I avoided calling her *sinä*. I addressed the nurses with V forms, even shyly, and they were also addressed with V forms by the other patients in the class—perhaps with the exception of the lieutenant. Since, apart from me, the youngest of the patients were approaching their thirties—the religious sergeant in traction was already a bit older than forty—all my friends called Lottas and Hilikka by their first names or *sinä*. The latter, in turn, addressed everyone older than themselves with V forms.

(*Liekkejä laulumailta* 1980)

The first-person narrator, the protagonist, does not mention in his metalinguistic description how he had been addressed earlier, which can be interpreted as an indication that readers would, in any case, know the reality on the basis of their own worldview or of the previous context. Rather, the protagonist makes it clear that the hospital staff have started to address him using his first name and T forms. This is explained by Kalle's age: he is the youngest of the patients, i.e., younger than the staff, and the same age as the youngest of the Lottas. In contrast, the older patients are addressed with V forms by the Lottas and nurses. This is not surprising, since the age of the addressee and the age difference between interlocutors are key factors in understanding the choice between T/V forms in Finland and more generally (Clyne et al. 2009; Paunonen 2010; Wide et al. 2019; Hippi and Lappalainen 2020). In present-day Finland, however, in the choice of V forms, the actual age difference between the parties concerned is likely to be much greater than in the case in the example described here. However, the use of T forms has not been entirely painless for all of the staff concerned, as is evidenced by the fact that Hilikka, who works for the Red Cross, has initially used indirect third-person forms when addressing Kalle.

The change in the use of the forms of address concerns not only how Kalle is addressed but also the way in which Kalle addresses others. Extract (2) shows how the various groups of hospital staff are addressed using different forms. Kalle reports that he addresses nurses using V forms, which is probably influenced by their education and position at the hospital. The respect they enjoy is also reflected in the fact that other patients do the same. In contrast, Kalle addresses Hilikka and Annikki (a Lotta) using T forms, whereas he is unable to do the same with Elina, a Lotta whom Kalle seems to be in love with. The description of his addressing her by her first name (but not with *sinä* forms) suggests that, in Kalle's hierarchy, the use of T forms is a more familiar form of address than the use of first names, by which he probably refers to this as an indirect way of addressing others in the third person. In

addition to his romantic feelings, his familiar way of addressing Elina may be inhibited by Kalle's knowledge that she comes from Helsinki and a middle class family—in other words, from a much more socially sophisticated background than Kalle himself. Later, however, after Elina has given Kalle a New Testament, they start to address each other using T forms.

3.2. Working Life, Marriage, and Tensions between Countryside and City

Approaching the novel series as a linguistic biography allows us to follow the changes in relationships and linguistic practices related to them over the course of the protagonist's life. This approach also reveals changes in the way that people address each other and the perceptions and feelings associated with these changes. The following example illustrates how the mode of addressing can change over time and how Kalle tends to adapt to the choices made by his interlocutor. Extract (3) describes a situation in which he is looking for a job after the war. The job situation is bad at the time, so he is in the position of an underdog. The recruiter turns out to be someone he knows, as Mr. Oksa is an acquaintance of Kalle's family and comes from his home village.

(3)

Käsitän olevani Oksalle kaikkea muuta kuin tervetullut asiakas. Jo siksikin, että hän on minua teititellyt. Ensimmäisen kerran elämässään! Minä olin puhutellut Oksaa teiksi poikasena ja vielä nuorukaisena, niin kuin selkosissamme lapset ja nuoret teitittelevät vanhempia ja etenkin herraskaisia ihmisiä. Sotahommissa olimme puolin ja toisin sinutelleet.

I find that I am anything but a welcome client for Oksa. This is evident especially in the fact that he has addressed me with *te* ['you V'] forms. For the first time in his life! I used to address Oksa with *te* ['you V'] as a boy and still as a young man, as children and young people do in my home region when addressing older people, especially genteel people. But in wartime jobs we had addressed each other by using *sinä* ['you T'] forms.

(Pohjalta ponnistaen 1983)

Because Mr. Oksa is older than Kalle and has been higher in the social hierarchy in Kalle's adolescence, Kalle has been accustomed to addressing him using V forms. However, they have served in the war on the same front and under these circumstances they have addressed each other using the informal T forms. But now, in this new situation, Kalle is hesitant about how to address and greet Oksa. The narrative context around the extract reveals that Kalle is confused and secretly outraged when Oksa shows no sign of knowing him, treating him instead with formal detachment. The conversation is obviously awkward for both parties, and Mr. Oksa, who is higher in the social hierarchy, distances Kalle from himself by addressing him using V forms. The metalinguistic commentary on the forms of address shows that the narrator interprets the choices of address as reflecting changes in the relations between himself and his interlocutor.

After the war, Kalle marries Laina, settles in the Tampere region, a large industrial city by Finnish standards, and qualifies as a construction foreman. Both his living in a large city and also his social rise through education distances Kalle from the people of his hometown. This social distance is also evident in Kalle's parents' relationship with his wife Laina, who comes from a city and has grown up in a family representing a higher social class than Kalle's (Keskimaa 2013). Extract (4) describes an interaction that occurs during Kalle's and Laina's first visit to Kalle's home in Taivalkoski.

(4)

–Sekö ei ui? Tarkotan että sekö... tuota eikö uija...

–Mitä tuo Hermannin oikein tappailoo ja puhuu nuin mutkasesti! Lainahan se on! Meidän minniä—minna, äiti sekoo isän puheeseen.—Kuulostaa kun puhutteleisi rinsessaa...

–Totta kai puhuttelette minua etunimeltä tai sinuksi, vaimoni sanoo.

- She doesn't swim? I mean, she doesn't. . . well, doesn't (she) swim. . .
- What's Hermanni trying to do but beat about the bush! It's Laina! Our daughter-in-law, mother butts into (my) father's talk.—That sounds as if you were addressing a princess.
- Of course you [V] call me by my first name or *sinä*, my wife says.

(*Nuorikkoa näyttämässä* 1984)

In the time-setting of the novel, the 1940s, it was typical to address one's in-laws using V forms, as Laina does (*puhuttele-tte* 'address-PL2(=V)') (see Paunonen 2010, pp. 340–42). In contrast, it has been assumed that parents-in-law would use T forms with their daughters-in-law (and sons-in-law) simply because of the age difference.³ In this light, the way that Kalle's father addresses Laina in the third person is exceptional. He refers to Laina with the pronoun *se*, which is the colloquial equivalent of the third-person pronoun (vs. *hän* 'she', 'he' in standard Finnish). The unpredictability of Hermanni's address choice is shown in the example by the fact that his wife notices it and comments on it publicly: *Mitä tuo Hermanni oikein tappailoo ja puhuu niin mutkasesti! Lainahan se on! Meijän minniä—minna* 'What's Hermanni trying to do but beating about the bush! It's Laina! Our daughter-in-law'. At the same time, Kalle's mother shows that she has the courage to call her daughter-in-law by her first name. In the *Iijoki Series* the narrator frequently describes the habit of avoiding the choice between T and V forms as a local peculiarity. However, similar strategies have also been used elsewhere in Finland (Yli-Vakkuri 2005). The timid reluctance of Kalle's father to address Laina in a more familiar way probably stems from Laina's urban background, which in itself places her in a higher social position in the eyes of her father-in-law. Laina tries to encourage her father-in-law to use a more familiar way of addressing her by offering him two options, to either call her by her first name or address her as *sinä*: *Totta kai puhuttelette minua etunimeltä tai sinuksi, vaimoni sanoo* 'Of course you[V] call me by my first name or *sinä* [you T]'.

The choice of the appropriate form of address is particularly prominent in the descriptions of Kalle's working life. By uttering their metalinguistic comments, Kalle and his workmates generally address each other informally, either using T forms or calling each other by their first names. However, a number of exceptions are repeatedly commented on. In addition to his discourse with older male employees, Kalle does not use informal forms with any female employees because he does not want to give the impression of having a relationship with them. At the beginning of his career, Kalle found it difficult to address his workmates using T forms, and even later he does not enjoy being formally addressed by others (Keskimaa 2018b, pp. 18–19; Lappalainen and Saviniemi 2023, pp. 160–61).

Extract (5) illustrates the situation at the construction site. Kalle has returned to his home region of Taivalkoski in northern Finland and works there as a construction foreman. His former acquaintances find it difficult to relate to him, since he has lived for years in a big city and has been educated. This has rendered him eminent in the eyes of the locals. Kalle, though, feels uncomfortable when old acquaintances address him indirectly, i.e., using, for instance, passive forms or nominal forms with third-person verb forms. In the extract below, he is visiting one of his construction sites, the Huttu school.

(5)

–On pärjätty näillähi tilapäisillä. Ja on uskottu, että kun mestari on luvannu toimittaa, niin tulevat aikanaan.

Olen tuntenut keittäjän penskavuositani lähtien. Keittäjä on minua puolisenkymmentä vuotta vanhempi. Hänen tavassaan puhutella minua on samaa arkailua, jota olen usein tavannut tultuani tekopitäjäni kunnan palvelukseen. Olen Hutun koulun keittäjälle huomauttanut "mestaroimisesta", mutta tuloksetta. Tällä kertaa en puutu asiaan, vaikka keittäjä puhuttelee Teemua ja Svandea etunimeltä.

–We have managed before with these temporary ones [instead of a fixed cabinetry]. And we have believed that, because the *mestari* has promised to deliver them, they will come in time.

I have known the cook since my childhood. The cook is half a decade or so older than me. Her way of addressing me conveys the same timidity that I have often encountered since coming to work for the municipality in my home town. I have pointed out to the Huttu school cook that she does not need to address me as a *mestari*, but to no avail. I won't intervene in the matter this time, even though the cook does call Teemu and Svande by their first names.

(*Epätietoisuuden talvi* 1992)

The school cook addresses Kalle in the third person and refers to him as *mestari* ('master'), which comes from *rakennusmestari*, 'construction foreman'. The narrator (Kalle) explains in his commentary why he feels uncomfortable because of the way he is addressed by the local people. The cook is only a little older than him and they have known each other since childhood, so the use of informal T forms would be more expected. Besides, the cook calls Kalle's colleagues by their first names—hence, more informally than her way of addressing Kalle, and Kalle has already pointed out to her that her way of addressing him is unnecessarily formal. The novel series reveals that Kalle has low self-esteem and therefore finds it difficult to put himself in a position in which he will be looked up to (see [Ylönen 2022](#), p. 164; [Lappalainen and Saviniemi 2023](#), pp. 162–63). At the same time, the comments on the forms of address in the narrative reinforce the image that Kalle feels disconnected from his former home region (see [Keskimaa 2018b](#), p. 15). His dislike of the indirect modes of address that avoid the choice between T and V forms, and which he considers to be particularly characteristic of the local people, increases when he mentally detaches himself from the area. Extract (5) is a good example of how the perceptions and feelings of the participants are not always revealed in the interaction itself (see the narrator's comment: *Tällä kertaa en puutu asiaan* 'I won't intervene in the matter this time'), but rather they are only conveyed through the narrator's metalinguistic commentary (see the sentences after the cook's comment).

The novel series culminates in Kalle's becoming a successful writer. This means another social rise for him, moving even into academic circles. His encounters with representatives of literary circles are a source of tension, as Kalle feels he is on unfamiliar ground. Such situations include meetings with the director Ville Repo, who works at a publishing house, and Repo's wife. In Extract (6), Mr. Repo and his wife pay their first joint visit to Kalle and his second wife, Leena.

(6)

Revon pariskunnan vierailu meille toteutui sovittuna aikana. Leenan ja minun Gummeruksen kirjallista johtajaa kohtaan aluksi tuntema maisterinpelko oli alkanut jo kustantajapäivien jälkeen haalistua. Aune-sisareni tunsu tätä pelkoa edelleen ja toimeutui vieraittemme saapumisiltana kylään. Tällä kertaa Leena ja minä jännitimme enemmän rouva Revon kuin hänen miehensä saapumista, mutta turhaan. Jo kahvipöydässä rupesimme rouva Revon aloitteesta kaikki neljä sinuttelemaan toisiamme.

–Kuulostaa kovin kankealta, jos Kalle ja Ville keskustelevat jatkuvasti näin viralisesti. Eikö kaunokirjallisesta tekstistä puhuminen vaatisi lähempää tuttavuutta? Teidän yhteistyönne kun tulee jatkumaan. Ja kai Leenan ja minunkin kieli on notkeampi, kun puhuttemme toisiamme etunimillä.

The Repo couple's visit to us took place at the appointed time. The fear that Leena and I initially felt towards the publishing director of Gummerus [the name of the publishing house] had begun to fade after the event that had been organized by the publishers. My sister Aune still felt this fear and organized herself out of the

house by visiting somebody. This time Leena and I were more excited about Mrs. Repo's arrival than that of her husband, but for no reason. At the coffee table all four of us, on Mrs. Repo's initiative, immediately began addressing each other using T forms.

–It sounds very stiff if Kalle and Ville insist on speaking to each other so formally. Wouldn't talking about a fictional text require closer acquaintance? Your collaboration will continue. And I suppose Leena and I can talk more flexibly⁴ when we start calling each other by our first names.

(*Pöyhökanto Iijoen törmässä* 1998)

The narrator explicitly describes the tension felt by him and his wife with respect to meeting other fiction writers and representatives of the publisher. Kalle feels inferior because he has not been academically educated. His tension is especially associated with Ville Repo, who is Kalle's editor at the publishing house, since he has a master's degree. But, as Extract (6) shows, Kalle's fear of Mr. Repo has begun to ease since they have become better acquainted with each other; however, Kalle and Leena do not yet know Repo's wife.⁵ Mrs. Repo, however, immediately takes the initiative by speaking in a more familiar manner. In accordance with etiquette, it is the woman who should suggest that interlocutors can call each other by their first names (Lappalainen 2015, p. 78). In this case, the initiative can be taken only by Mrs. Repo since she is higher in the social hierarchy than Kalle's wife, Leena. When she justifies her suggestion, Mrs. Repo appeals to the prospect of smooth professional cooperation between Kalle and her husband, but adds that it will also be a matter of greater convenience between herself and Leena. The narrator's comment shows that he equates Mrs. Repo's initiative to the use of first names when addressing each other using T forms: *rupesimme rouva Revon aloitteesta kaikki neljä sinuttelemaan toisiamme* 'all four of us, on Mrs. Repo's initiative, immediately began addressing each other using T forms'. The narrator does not directly explain in detail how he and his wife experience this initiative, but its positive interpretation becomes apparent in light of the preceding comment that their tension with respect to Mrs. Repo proves to be unnecessary.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This article has paid particular attention to the metalinguistic comments concerning the modes of address in a large autobiographical novel series, the *Iijoki Series* (1971–1998), by Kalle Päätalo. Our analysis is based on searches done in the digital corpus of the whole series. The study is grounded in previous sociopragmatic research into modes of address and also into folk linguistics. Our aim has been to investigate how address practices are commented on in the *Iijoki Series* as part of the protagonist's linguistic biography and how the choices related to the forms of address have been justified in the narrative. Our aim has also been to show how the forms of address reflect social relations between the protagonist and other characters.

Our analysis shows that Kalle, the fictional protagonist of the series, mirrors his own and others' choices of address throughout his life against the norms he has learned since his childhood in his home region. The most essential norm is that old or unknown people cannot be addressed using informal T forms. Our examples also illustrate how Kalle perceives the avoidance of the choice between T and V forms through various indirect forms of address and considers this strategy to be particularly typical of his home region. In the context of the *Iijoki Series*, the use of first names refers to indirect third-person addresses. On the continuum of formality, this is located between the T and V forms, representing informal rather than formal address. These address practices are commented on and reflected in descriptions of Kalle's childhood, his military service, his working life and also in his relationships with women.

In our discussion of the particular factors used in justifying choices of address patterns, our study shows familiar social categories: the (relative) age, sex, social class, status and regional background of the interlocutors (Clyne et al. 2009; Paunonen 2010). However, rather than being stable entities, these categories are intertwined, and their importance

changes along with Kalle's own age, status, and place of residence in the course of his life. We have also shown how an address practice can make the addressee, the speaker—or, indeed, both—for example, feel annoyed, embarrassed or delighted. Hence, we would argue that metalinguistic comments that verbalize characters' perceptions of address practices reflect the characters' social relations as well as the development of and changes in these relationships. These aspects can be examined as part of the linguistic biography because of the longitudinal nature of the data.

The metalinguistic comments concerning the forms of address shed light on the social norms of the period during which the events of the novel series take place by focusing on both predictable cases and also cases where norms are violated. The novel series depicts not only the linguistic biography and social rise of one fictional character but also the broader transformation of Finnish society, from the rural communities of the early 20th century to a subsequently urbanising society (Saviniemi and Mantila 2022, p. 9). The metalinguistic comments and the representation of address practices in the novel series cannot be seen as a direct reflection of historical reality, but we would argue, on the basis of our results and also of the previous research available on address patterns during that period, that the *Iijoki Series* provides a credible picture of the Finnish speech culture of its time, especially with reference to the period from the 1920s to the 1950s. During that period, the use of V forms and titles was much more common than it is nowadays (see Paunonen 2010). In addition, the series of novels sheds new light on address patterns in contexts that have not been focused on previously in address research. The *Iijoki Series* describes, for instance, the way in which the members of different work communities (especially people working on construction sites) were in the habit of addressing each other. The novels also show situations in which the power relationships between the participants are relevant, such as when applying for a job or being in military service. Previous conclusions concerning the address patterns of the same period are based mainly on questionnaires concerning retrospective observations of rather limited social relations (Paunonen 2010). In contrast, the *Iijoki Series* expands the overall picture by presenting a greater variety of contexts and the longitudinal perspectives relevant to them.

Kalle Päätaalo's *Iijoki Series* is one of the longest autobiographical works ever written, and, hence, it provides an exceptionally rich resource for the study of metalinguistic commentary. We believe, however, that other novel series or individual works may also prove to be interesting objects for research in this respect. In our own research, the focus has been only on metalinguistic comments, but our study could be complemented by analysing the ways in which the forms of address occur in the dialogue. Fictional dialogues are, of course, the author's interpretation of reality and their analysis cannot replace the analysis of an authentic interaction; nevertheless, fiction is able to expose the past and other situations to which we have no other access.

Our aim in this article has also been to show how research into the language of fiction can contribute an additional body of research into address practices. Not all authentic situations are easily accessible and there is very limited access to those that have taken place in the past. Authentic conversations seldom reveal how participants experience being addressed and how they reflect their own choices. Fiction, in contrast, often provides access to the perceptions and attitudes of the characters through the narrator's metalinguistic comments, sometimes also in the form of dialogue. Research into fictional texts can also provide further ideas concerning the kinds of situations that could be explored in future research, both through surveys and interviews and also by analysing authentic interactions.

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Abbreviations of Glossing Symbols

IMP	Imperative
PART	Partitive
PST	Past tense
POSS	Possessive suffix
PL	Plural
SG	Singular

Notes

- ¹ In this article all of the Finnish extracts have been translated by the authors. We have focused in our translations on the main content of the extracts, since our skills are not sufficient to convey, for instance, the author's dialectal style in English.
- ² The war hospital was located on the school premises.
- ³ This happens, for example, between Kalle and his first mother-in-law. Kalle addresses her using V forms, while his mother-in-law addresses him using T forms.
- ⁴ Literally: 'Leena's and my tongue is suppler'.
- ⁵ Kalle's sister Aune, who lives with Kalle and Leena, is so nervous about the guests that she leaves the place.

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