

English abstract

Aging and language use

This collection introduces recent research on aging and language use in the Finnish context. It unravels the homogenous image of aging and offers critical perspectives on the questions of aging, older adults, care, and language use.

The collection consists of nine articles. There is first a general review on language use and aging as a research area by Camilla Lindholm, Anne Mäntynen and Kaarina Hippo. Besides presenting earlier studies on the topic, and introducing the following articles, this introductory article discusses how linguistic research could meet the future challenges of aging in Finnish society.

The subsequent articles open new perspectives to the topic from different fields of study. Antti Karisto discusses concepts of old age from the perspective of social gerontology, challenging the reader to ponder for instance the meaning of the different expressions referring to older adults, and why these expressions are perceived problematic. The discussion on naming and categorizing older adults is also present in the article by Anne Mäntynen and Mikko Virtanen, as they analyse Finnish media texts from the perspective of critical discourse studies. Their study focuses on the representation and categorization of old people both as individuals and as groups. The results show how different representations are tied to particular journalistic genres, and how the discussion on older adults in the media is organized following a discourse order.

Addressing old people is the theme of the article by Kaarina Hippo and Hanna Lappalainen. The study discusses perceptions on addressing based on interviews as well as addressing old people in everyday situations in a care home. It shows that many consider age as a decisive factor when choosing more formal V-forms even though the question is not straightforward, and many older adults themselves prefer informal

address practices and T-forms. Analysis of interaction in a care home reveals the multifaceted functions of addressing by the first name, besides selecting the recipient.

Linguistic and interactional changes in aging are the focus of Seija Pekkala's review article with a logopaedic approach. The article discusses both changes in normal aging, in mild cognitive impairment and in the case of memory diseases. In addition, Pekkala discusses the evaluation and rehabilitation concerning language use in old age.

The following three articles focus on care contexts from different angles. First, Sari Pietikäinen, Sanna Tapionkaski and Anne Mäntynen focus on linguistic practices in bilingual care homes based on ethnographic work. Special attention is given to how languages and linguistic practices are organized according to space, time and action. Camilla Lindholm and Camilla Wide, then, discuss how the minority language Swedish and the majority language Finnish meet in a care home whose official language is Swedish. The study utilizes the methods of conversation analysis and ethnography, illustrating how positioning and linguistic choices reflect wider practices in society. Interaction among the residents in a care home is studied by Kaarina Hippi in the next article that shows how residents chat and request help from one another when there is no care giver attending the conversation. The article illuminates how the care home is perceived sometimes more home-like, at other times as an institution; residents orient to each other differently based on situational and individual differences.

The concluding article by Ulla Tiililä discusses accessibility of social services especially from the point of view of older persons' needs, which is often forgotten or neglected in public discussion. Tiililä highlights that in accessing the services, language and texts play an important role, and argues that their quality influences remarkably the wellbeing of older adults.