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Requests in corner shop transactions in Ecuadorian Andean and Coastal Spanish¹

[Post-print version]*

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*Please note that the text in this version does not necessarily exactly correspond to the published version

1. Introduction

On the basis of audio-recordings and observation of naturally occurring interactions, I explore pragmatic variation in the realization of requests in corner shop (*tiendas de barrio*) transactions in Quito and Manta. Quito and Manta are taken here to represent the two main sub-varieties of Ecuadorian Spanish (ES) that have been identified (Toscano Mateus 1953, Lipski 1994, Córdova 1996): Andean or *Serrano* Spanish and Coastal or *Costeño* Spanish, respectively. It should be noted that some sub-regional variation, at the phonological level, for example, has been described for these two broad varieties (cf. Lipski 1994). It is therefore possible that variation at the pragmatic level will also be found. As such, the labels Andean and Coastal are treated here as referring to Quito and Manta more specifically. Additionally, it should be noted that there are a number of studies available that deal with pragmatic aspects of Ecuadorian Andean Spanish (see below). There are, however, no pragmatic studies on Ecuadorian Coastal Spanish. This study thus also aims to contribute to the (pragmatic) characterization of Ecuadorian Coastal Spanish.

In this analysis, I build on my previous proposal (Placencia 1994, 1998) that *pragmatic variation* or the study of language use in context across varieties of Spanish (or other languages), or what Schneider & Barron (this volume) call “intra-lingual pragmatic variation”, merits attention, as does the study of variation at other levels, such as the lexical or morphosyntactic levels.

While most studies that explicitly or implicitly examine pragmatic variation, at least with reference to Spanish, focus on national varieties and cultures, such as Puga Larraín (1997) does in a study of Chilean Spanish and Peninsular

Spanish, here I examine variation with respect to the two sub-varieties referred to above, that is, in relation to Schneider & Barron's "sub-national" level. I also highlight the need for more studies that look at such intra-cultural variation.

Pragmatic variation can be analyzed in relation to different domains, as Schneider & Barron (this volume) propose, including speech act realization and the overall organization of conversation. Here I look at these two domains which, to employ Spencer-Oatey's (2000) classification of domains in the study of rapport management, I call the *illocutionary* and the *discourse* domains, respectively. I also consider Spencer-Oatey's *stylistic* domain in relation to "the stylistic aspects of an interchange, such as choice of tone (for example, serious or joking) ... and choice of genre-appropriate terms of address" (2000: 20), and her *participatory* domain, which refers to aspects of turn-taking. The *non-verbal* domain (e.g. the use of eye contact, gestures and proxemics) is also part of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) classification of domains in the handling of rapport management. Some reference is made to this area in this paper; however, it is not included as a separate domain for examination since video recordings of the interactions would be needed for a systematic analysis.²

Before the results are considered, some background to the study is offered, including a brief review of work on requests, with reference to Spanish, in particular, and some methodological considerations. Details on the data examined are then provided.

2. Background

2.1 Studies on requests and some methodological considerations

The study of requests has been approached from different perspectives, employing different methodologies. Initial interest in this area derived from work in speech act theory and the ethnography of communication in the 1960s and 1970s. Searle (1969) outlined conditions and rules for speech acts, including requests, which he claimed to be universal; this, together with his (1975) characterization of different types of indirectness and his suggestion that indirectness is associated with politeness, sparked considerable interest in the empirical examination of requests and other speech acts across languages. On the other hand, in the same period, it was Hymes (1967, 1974) who highlighted the embeddedness of communicative activities in their social context, prompting the investigation of the "rules of speaking" associated with different "speech events" in different "speech communities". Ervin-Tripp's (1976) study on directives in American English is among the first to draw on the ethnography of speaking tradition.

In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in requests was fuelled by Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness, where requests were presented as

prototypical face-threatening acts requiring redressive action, and also by the work of Blum-Kulka and her colleagues (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) who sought to explore the realization of requests and apologies in seven different languages. Building on Searle's (1975) work on (in)directness, Blum Kulka et al. (1989) developed a coding scheme to categorize request realization. Also, under the influence of studies in second language acquisition, they developed a methodology, namely, the use of discourse completion tasks (DCTs), to facilitate comparisons across cultures and between native speakers and learners. Both their coding scheme and methodology or related methodologies (e.g. role plays) have since been extensively used. In contrast, studies on requests drawing on the ethnography of speaking tradition of employing data obtained in their natural environment have not been as numerous.

DCTs and other data elicitation tools offer a number of methodological and practical advantages as they allow for variable control and the collection of large samples of data in a (relatively) short period of time. Nonetheless, the extent to which the data they elicit represent actual use has often been subject to discussion (see, for example, Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1992, Beebe & Cummings 1996, Félix-Brasdefer 2003). Concerning DCTs, it is now generally agreed that they mainly provide access to informants' perceptions only (cf. Kasper 2000, Lorenzo & Bou 2003). In this respect, based on a study on responses to compliments using DCTs and naturally occurring data, Golato, for example, claims that "while DCTs provide researchers with data rather quickly, that data can be very different from naturalistically collected data" (2003: 110). As to the data elicited using role-plays, the degree of "naturalness" seems to depend on, amongst other factors, the degree to which the role-play is structured (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2003), a factor related to the degree of "researcher involvement" (Potter & Wetherell 1995) in the generation of the data, as well as other factors such as the familiarity of respondents with the situation or the particular role they are required to play.³ However, there seems to be a consensus that while role play data approximate naturally occurring interactions more than DCT data, data obtained by means of role plays cannot be taken as a "faithful representation of reality", to use Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (2005: 29) words.⁴

This is not to say that the use of naturally occurring data is problem-free (cf. Márquez Reiter & Placencia 2005). The "naturalness" of the data given the presence of the researcher or a tape-recorder can be and is often questioned. In relation to service encounters as those in the present study, however, we do not think this presented a major problem given that in these encounters a real transaction, meaningful to both participants, is at stake therefore demanding their full attention. In this respect, we agree with Malone (1997: 152) when he says that there may be some self-monitoring, but that "conversations demand participant attention, and hence talkers are quickly drawn in, or the interaction fails" (see also Duranti 1997). At the same time, given the nature of the en-

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counter in corner shops, there are no issues of privacy or confidentiality as there may be in other types of encounters (e.g., doctor-patient interactions) where the presence of an observer may create unease among the participants and make them more aware of their speech and of the exchange.

A further problem with some naturally occurring data is that it may be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain information about the participants (e.g., age, occupation, origin or ethnicity, the relationship between participants); this information can be very important particularly in contrastive studies as the groups need to be comparable. In some contexts, as in the present study, this, however, can be overcome to some extent with access to the service providers who can give out some information about their customers (see also Placencia 2004). Nonetheless, information about factors, such as age, can only be noted down impressionistically.

Another problem is that in cross-cultural studies, it may be difficult to find truly equivalent contexts; for example, the physical setting in corner shops may be different from one place to another and this may affect the way the transaction is carried out.⁵ This was indeed a factor taken into account in the choice of corner shops in the present study.

On the other hand, one obvious advantage in the use of naturally occurring data is that it allows communicative activities, such as requests, to be studied in the sequences in which they are embedded. Studies based on DCTs, for example, are subject to the criticism that has for some time now been leveled at the examination of speech acts in isolation given the importance of the co-text in the interpretation of utterances (cf. Franck 1981, Linell 1996). Blum-Kulka herself more recently advocates the examination of stretches of discourse rather than isolated speech acts (cf. Blum-Kulka 1997). The co-text is also important for the interpretation of the rapport value of each utterance in relation to preceding or following utterances. In request studies, following Brown & Levinson (1987), the emphasis has been on relating isolated request realizations to politeness strategies. However, it is not only in the actual request that interpersonal concerns are expressed. Rather, rapport-enhancing strategies, for example, may initially be put into operation in opening exchanges from the outset of the interaction, through the exchange of greetings and how-are-you inquiries, as well as through other interactional exchanges over the course of the encounter (cf. Placencia 2004).

Ultimately, however, the choice of methodology and hence type of data employed has to be made in relation to the goals pursued by the researcher, and often, practical considerations. The present study is an exploration of similarities and differences in the way customers and service providers in Quito and Manta *actually* carry out their transactions in a specific situational context. For this purpose, naturally occurring data are regarded here as “essential to get a clear idea of the workings of language,” also to use Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s (2005: 29) words.

In brief, in examining requests in corner-shop transactions, the present study draws on elements of the different traditions considered in this section:

the focus is not only on requests, but rather on the sequences in which they are embedded; the study is carried out on the basis of naturally occurring interactions. As such, it is in line with Kong (1998), who examined particular service encounter transactions in Hong Kong and, more recently, Upadhyay (2003) who looked at requests in service encounters and other contexts in Nepal. In terms of looking at the transaction as a whole, it can also be said to be similar, for example, to Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (2005) study on transactions at the bakery in France.

For the analysis of request utterances, we draw on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) framework. We also draw on politeness theory, albeit in a broad sense, to discuss interpersonal concerns that can be manifested through different domains (cf. Spencer-Oatey 2000). In this area, we build on Aston's (1988) work on how friendly relations are constructed and on more recent work that deals with relational talk and its functions, as exemplified in Coupland's (2000) collection of papers on small talk. Both conventional forms of phatic communication, such as greeting and parting exchanges, and also creative, individualized forms, such as verbal playfulness (cf. De Klerk & Bosch 1999), joking and teasing (cf. Norrick 1993), were particularly prominent in the Quiteño corpus.

2.2 Requests in Spanish

As far as Spanish is concerned, one of the first studies on requests is Blum-Kulka & House's (1989) study on Argentinean Spanish in contrast with four other languages. The study examined directness levels in different situations, showing that despite some situational variation, conventional indirectness was the most frequently used type of strategy for all the languages examined, including Argentinean Spanish. Argentinean Spanish, nevertheless, displayed a more frequent use of directness relative to the other languages examined.

Studies on requests in Spanish along the lines of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) [workstudy](#), i.e. also based on elicited data obtained mainly through DCTs or role plays, are numerous. They include, amongst others, García (1993) on Peruvian Spanish and García (2002) on Venezuelan Spanish, Le Pair (1996) on Peninsular Spanish and Spanish L2 among Dutch participants, Arellano (2000) on the Spanish of Mexican Americans in California, Márquez Reiter (2002) on Uruguayan and Peninsular Spanish, and Vázquez Orta (1995), Díaz Pérez (1999), and Lorenzo & Bou (2003) on Peninsular Spanish and British English. On the other hand, Hurley's (1995) study of requests in ES and Quichua in the Otavalo area in northern Ecuador combines the use of data from interviews in which role-play questions were presented with recordings of naturally occurring interactions. Other works on requests/directives based on naturally occurring data include Fitch's (1994) ethnographic study in Colombia (Bogotá) and the U.S. (Boulder, CO), and Placencia's on (a) requests for information at reception counters in hospitals in Quito and Madrid (1998), (b)

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directives, including requests by service providers, in La Paz (2002), and (c) requests for a product in corner shop interactions in Quito and Madrid (2005). These studies, with the exception of Placencia (2005), do not employ Blum-Kulka's framework of analysis so direct comparisons with the results from the studies above are not possible.

With respect to studies along the line of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), in terms of head acts, a recurrent pattern among most studies is the higher overall frequency of conventional indirectness relative to direct requests. One exception regarding Peninsular Spanish is Lorenzo & Bou (2003). Their study is based on data obtained from a DCT with six situations where social variables were manipulated to produce interactions involving different combinations of power relations (+/-/=) and social distance (+/-). Concerning levels of directness, the authors found that, overall, direct forms predominate in both male and female speech; the exception was a situation involving +power and +social distance where conventional indirectness was employed more frequently. The difference in results with other studies may be related to intra-lingual variation within Spain, or perhaps to Lorenzo & Bou's inclusion of two service encounter situations among the five situations yielding higher levels of directness. In a study based on naturally occurring interactions with shopkeepers in corner shops in Madrid, Placencia (2005) found a clear preference for directness on the part of customers. It is possible that the use of directness in certain kinds of service encounters is characteristic of the activity type irrespective of the degree of power or social distance between the participants. Both old and new customers may ask for a loaf of bread, for example, by means of a direct form (*una barra de pan* 'a loaf of bread') because it is the most efficient way of carrying out the transaction. In any case, Lorenzo & Bou do not provide results for all the situations they examined so it is not feasible to make any comparisons with other studies; additionally, comparisons with other studies are difficult to make in that the situations employed in each study tend to be different.

Beyond Peninsular Spanish, the imperative (with a politeness formula) was found to be the preferred request realization in Arellano's (2000) study of requests among Mexican Americans in California, based on a DCT with a multiple choice format. The use of the imperative (accompanied by downgraders) also prevails in Hurley's contrastive study of Spanish and Quichua in a range of requests in the Otavalo area in Ecuador, an area of prolonged contact between Quichua and Spanish. Interestingly, conventional indirectness was hardly existent in Hurley's ES corpus and nonexistent in her Quichua corpus. Fitch's (1994) ethnographic study, based on a sample of 1000 instances of directives in Colombia, also highlights the widespread use of directness in a range of contexts; the author links this phenomenon to the existence in Colombia of what she calls an ideology of interconnectedness. Additionally, Fitch explores matters of compliance gaining, uncovering the existence of *intermediated* directives, that is, "directives reissued by someone other than the original persuader" (1994: 195). For some desired actions to be successfully carried out, help from a suitable intermediary needs to be sought. These are directives that can only be accessed when naturally occurring interactions are observed.

Placencia's (1998) study of requests in hospitals in Quito and Madrid, employing Blum-Kulka et al.'s terminology, shows a higher frequency of direct forms over conventionally indirect ones in both sociocultural contexts, and, more clearly so does Placencia (2005) in the context of corner shops in Quito and Madrid, as indicated above. The direct forms identified in these studies are not restricted to the use of the imperative but include elliptical forms or what we call here quasi-imperatives. As in these studies, the present work shows an overall preference for direct requests in both Andean and Coastal Spanish in the context examined. This is not surprising given that customers normally ask for what they are entitled to; in other words, requesting a particular product, such as a carton of milk, is within the specifications of the activity type (Levinson 1979) and should not require much verbal effort. Nonetheless, as we shall see, Quiteños employ a great deal more internal modification in their request formulation and produce more relational talk overall; this suggests that they do not perceive the corner shop transaction in the same way as Manteños do.

With respect to internal modification, some general patterns have been noted. Vázquez Orta (1995) and Díaz Pérez (1999), among others, have found that syntactic and lexical downgraders are less frequent in Peninsular Spanish than in British English, for example. Comparing varieties of Spanish, Márquez Reiter (2002) found less modification in Peninsular Spanish than in Uruguayan Spanish. Placencia (1998) reports on the more frequent use of politeness formulas, for example, in ES compared to Peninsular Spanish, and a preference for formality in ES, in contrast with Peninsular Spanish, as reflected in the use of address forms and other lexical choices. Likewise, Placencia (2005) reports of a much smaller use of interpersonal padding in transactions in corner shops in Madrid compared to interactions in similar shops in Quito. Quiteños were found to use more politeness formulas and diminutives, for example, than Madrileños.

However, as we noted earlier, very little attention has been paid to intra-cultural variation. The present study shows less internal modification in Manta when compared to Quito. Interestingly, in this respect, and in the use of relational talk more generally, we found that the behaviour of Manteños represented in this study, appears to have more features in common with that of Madrileños as described above and also in Placencia (2005). As such, this study highlights the need for more studies on intra-lingual variation before any generalizations can be made about national varieties of a particular language.

3. Data

This study is based on audio-recordings of 171 interactions, gathered *in situ*, in five corner shops in comparable residential neighbourhoods of Quito and Manta, representing here, as stated earlier, Andean and Coastal Spanish, re-

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spectively. Specifically, the corpus consists of 68 interactions from two shops in Quito and 103 interactions from three shops in Manta. Permission was sought from shopkeepers to make the recordings, and a sign was placed at the entrance of the shop informing customers of the recording and giving them the possibility of opting out.

In both cities, the shops selected sold basic food products on a daily basis. They were located in the heart of their neighbourhoods and had been long established (between six and ten years). The five selected shops offered service over the counter for the majority of products sold, transactions thus requiring verbal interaction.

No attempt was made to take account of social variables, such as the age or sex of the participants. Four shopkeepers were involved in each geographic location, three women and one man, all middle-aged, in Quito; and two women and two men, also all middle-aged, in Manta. In Quito, the number of female shoppers was higher (42 vs. 26), whereas in the Manteño group the number of male shoppers was higher (57 vs. 46), possibly reflecting in both cases the fact that females in Quito and males in Manta appear to be more frequent users of these shops. The majority of customers were between the ages of 20 and 55.⁶ The audio-recordings were made at different times to ensure a wide representation of the respective populations of shoppers. Informal interviews with the shopkeepers were made to ascertain the type of relationship they had with different customers and to clarify some language uses. Shopkeepers reported to knowing the majority of customers well from regular contact over a number of years, and it was ascertained that no customers and shopkeepers had relationships with each other outside the corner shop context.

4. Findings

4.1 The illocutionary domain

The focus of the analysis in the illocutionary domain was on request utterances, more precisely on the first request for a product in the interaction. Requests for favours that go beyond the normal transaction were not included in the main analysis.

Following Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), requests from both datasets were examined with respect to the customers' choice of overall request strategies and sub-strategies, internal modification as well as the use of supportive moves.

Also, in line with Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) categorization of the (in)directness of request strategies, direct and conventionally indirect strategies were differentiated. No instances of non-conventional indirectness were found. Examples (1) and (2) below illustrate direct and conventionally indirect requests, respectively.

(1) [Quiteño Spanish] (QS, henceforth)⁷

por favor deme pancito
please give^V me bread^D

- (2) [Manteño Spanish] (MS, henceforth)
me puede vender una pasta de tomate
can you^V sell me one tomato puree

Direct requests in the data examined include the use of imperatives as in (1) (*deme ...* ‘give me ...’), quasi-imperatives or elliptical forms⁸ as in (3) (*un litro de leche* ‘one litre of milk’), want statements, as in (4) (... *quiero* ‘... I want’), and assertions of the hearer’s course of action, as in (5) (*me da ...* ‘you give me ...’):

- (3) [MS]
un litro de leche
one litre of milk
- (4) [MS]
diez libras de arroz quiero
ten pounds of rice **I want**
- (5) [MS]
me da una de sal
you^V **give me** one [bag] of salt

Imperatives, quasi-imperatives and want statements fall within Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) subcategories of direct forms; however, there is no equivalent in their coding scheme for *me da...* ‘you give me...’. Assertions of this type seem to be as forceful as other direct forms, such as want statements or elliptical forms, in that they assume that the hearer will carry out the action. Similar forms produced with question intonation have been classified as instances of conventional indirectness by some authors. Le Pair (1996: 663), for example, translates *¿Me ayudas...?* as ‘Do you help me?’ and presents this form under the label of prediction of hearer’s course of action, together with forms of the ‘‘Will you do X?’’ type. However, as suggested by Carmen García (personal communication) (in Placencia 2005: 597), the use of question intonation with utterances of this type may be more appropriately regarded as a type of ‘‘prosodic downgrader’’ of the direct form illustrated in (5) above.

Conventionally indirect forms in the data analysed correspond to Blum-Kulka et al.’s preparatory strategy, as in (2) (*me puede vender ...* ‘can you sell me ...’). Direct forms were found to predominate in both groups with 67 instances (98.52%) in the Quiteño corpus, and 101 instances (98.05%) in the Manteño corpus. There was only one instance (1.47%) of conventional indirectness in the Quiteño data and two (1.94%) in the Manteño corpus. As for

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directness substrategies, their distribution in both datasets was as represented by Figure 1.

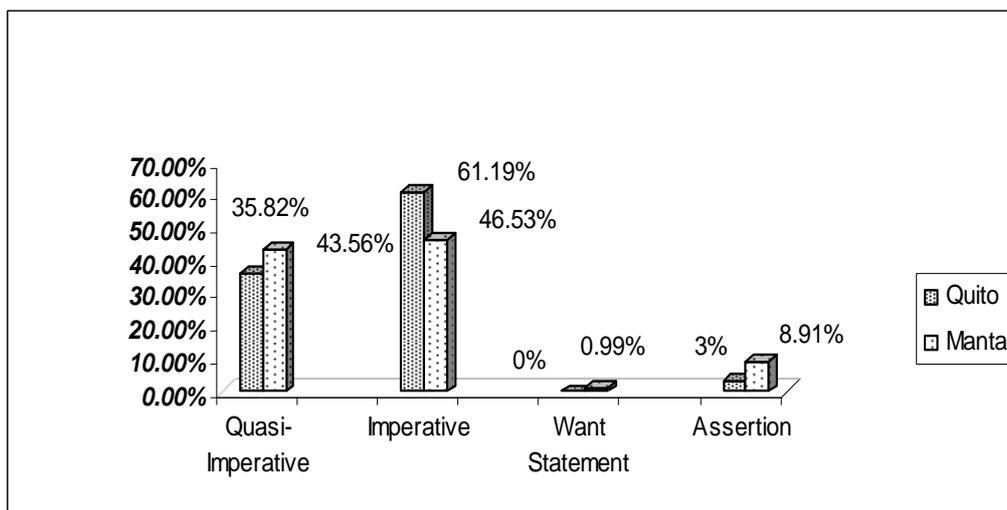
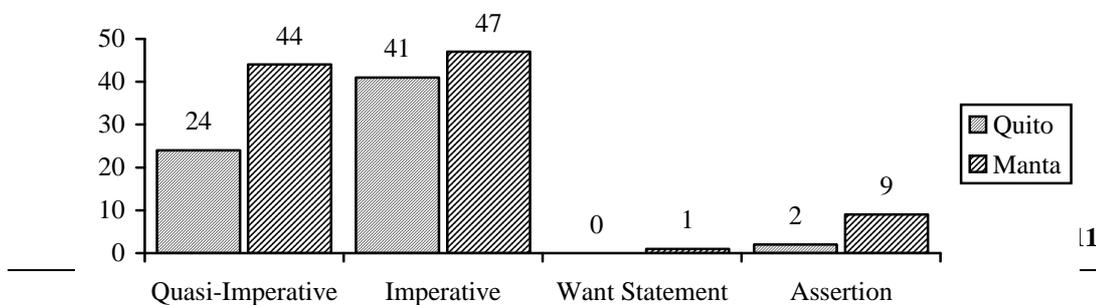


Figure 1. Directness substrategies in Quito and Manta

As we can see, while Quiteño participants prefer imperatives in particular (61.19% corresponding to 41 instances), Manteño customers display a very similar preference for the use of quasi-imperatives (43.56% corresponding to 44 instances) and imperatives (46.53% corresponding to 47 instances).

With respect to internal modification, internal modification of the head act with a mitigating function was realized in QS using diminutives, politeness formulas, lexical downgrading of the command verb and hedging mechanisms.

An example of the use of diminutives can be found in (6) (*pancito* ‘bread^D’). This example also illustrates the use of the politeness formula *por favor* ‘please’ and lexical downgrading of the command verb, where *regalar* ‘to give away’ is used instead of the standard *dar* ‘to give’, making the request sound more like a plea. Under hedging mechanisms, I refer to the use of vagueness or a lack of specificity (cf. Jucker et al. 2003) as to the amount of product requested, including the use of generic forms such as *pancito* ‘bread^D’ in (6), or hedges proper preceding the specification of the product requested, as in *unas* ‘some’ in (7). These seem to function as softeners of the request.

- (6) [QS]
regáleme pancito por favor
 give^v me bread^D for free’ please

- (7) [QS]

[Type text]

unas seis de éstas deme
give^V me **some** six of these

Instances of all of these strategies, except the lexical downgrading through verb choice, were also found in the Manteño data, albeit to a much lower degree. Comparing the two datasets in this respect, while 91 instances were found in the Quiteño corpus (with an average of 1.33 occurrences per request), only 15 instances (with an average of 0.14 occurrences per request) were found in the Manteño corpus.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the subtypes of internal modification employed in the two language varieties.

Table 1: Subtypes of internal modification in Quito and Manta

	Diminutive	Politeness Formula	Lexical Downgrading	Hedges	Total Number of Instances
Quito	37(40.65%)	22 (24.18%)	8 (8.79%)	24 (26.37%)	91 (100%)
Manta	8 (53.33%)	4 (26.66%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (20.00%)	15 (100%)

As can be seen, Quiteño participants use more diminutives, followed by hedges, politeness formulas and lexical downgrading.⁹ The findings for the Manteño data interestingly enough are very much in line with those reported for Madrileños in a similar context (Placencia 2005), as noted earlier.

It is also worthwhile pointing out that, as far as diminutives are concerned, the Quiteño data exhibit greater variation in the type of structure to which the diminutive can be attached: diminutives can be used with the noun corresponding to the product requested as in (8), demonstrative pronouns as in (9), numerals as in (10) and adjectives qualifying the product requested as in (11). The few instances of diminutives in the Manteño data appear only with one structure: nouns corresponding to the product requested.

(8) [QS]
deme cuatro pancitos
give^V me four bread rolls^D

(9) [QS]
y estito también
and this^D too

(10) [QS]
docitas leches
two^D milks

(11) [QS]

un queso fresquito ...
 one fresh^D cheese ...

In relation to politeness formulas, in addition to more frequent use, a wider range of formulas was found in the Quiteño corpus, including *por favor* ‘please’, *tenga la bondad* ‘have the kindness/be kind enough’ and *hágame el favor* ‘do me a favour’. From these, only the standard *por favor* was found in the Manteño data, except for requests that go beyond the normal duties of the shopkeeper, where more elaborate request formulas were also found. Such requests include, for example, asking for change for a dollar note, when change is normally scarce, as illustrated by example (12).

- (12) [MS]
hágame un gran favor don Ramiro cámbieme éste
 do^V me a big favour Don Ramiro give^V me change for this

These results in relation to the Manteño corpus are, once more, in line with findings for Madrileño Spanish in a similar context and with claims that have been made for Peninsular Spanish more generally concerning the infrequent use of politeness formulas. Hickey (1991), for example, suggests that formulas such as *por favor* ‘please’ or *gracias* ‘thank you’ tend to be used in Peninsular Spanish “in asking or giving thanks for a personal favor, as distinct from a service that is part of one’s duty, such as a shop assistant’s duty to serve and a customer’s duty to pay for, an article purchased” (1991: 4) (see also Haverkate 1994). As illustrated here, Hickey’s suggestion seems to be applicable to the Manteño context too.

In their first request in the interaction, Quiteños were also found to avoid specifying the amount of a particular product they wished to purchase more frequently than Manteños (10 vs. 3) (14.7% vs. 2.9%), as in (13) below. Instead, they use generic forms, such as *pancito* ‘bread^D’ (line 03) or *leche* ‘milk’, forcing shopkeepers to produce an additional turn requesting specification of the amount required:

- (13) [QS] (C = Customer; SK = Shopkeeper)
- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 03 | C | <i>por favor deme pancito</i>
please give ^V me bread ^D |
| 04 | SK | <i>de cuál</i>
what kind |
| 05 | C | <i>eh (0.2) deme pa: n tiene reventados↑</i>
uh (0.2) give ^V me brea: d have you ^V got reventados↑ |
| 06 | SK | <i>sí cuántos</i>
yes how many |
| 07 | C | <i>a ver deme (0.1.) dos reventados dos de estas empanaditas↑</i>
let me see give ^V me (0.1) two reventados two of these turn-
overs ^D ↑ |

[Type text]

Being unspecific in this context may be interpreted as Quiteños preferring a more gradual or what they might deem a less brusque approach to the transaction.¹⁰ This feature, nevertheless, appears to be gender-related as it occurs in the speech of eight females vs. two males in Quito. This is something that would need to be explored in a larger sample. In Manta, generic forms appear in the speech of three males only. However, taking into account the co-text and paralinguistic features (i.e., volume), it may be wrong to classify all the three forms identified in the Manteño corpus as downgraders. In two of the three instances available, they are produced in a loud voice and on their own (e.g. *MAÍZ* ‘CORN’), as the customer enters the shop. They thus seem to act as upgraders, in that they constitute forceful demands for service.

Yet another difference between Quiteños and Manteños in their use of internal modification in the context examined is that Quiteños may use multiple downgraders in the same request utterance, employing sometimes three or even four of the elements listed earlier, as in (14). In this example, the customer uses a hedge (*unos* ‘some’), a diminutive with the product requested (*pancitos* ‘bread rolls^D’) and a lexical downgrader (*regáleme* ‘give^V them to me ‘for free’’):

- (14) [QS]
unos diez pancitos regáleme
 some ten bread rolls^D give^V them to me ‘for free’

In the Manteño corpus, the use of more than one strategy was found only in requests that go beyond the rights and obligations attached to corner shop transactions, as in example (15) below where the customer requests a cup to drink the soft drink he is going to purchase. While *regalar* ‘to give away’ is employed literally in this example, three other downgrading strategies can be identified: Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) query preparatory embedded in another question also querying the feasibility of the action, and the use of a diminutive:

- (15) [MS]
sí me puede regalar un vasito ↑
 do you^V think you^V can give me a cup^D↑

As for aggravators, shouting is a paralinguistic device employed only by Manteños, particularly by males, that can make the request more forceful, as in (16):

- (16) [MS]
UN DÓLAR DE QUESO (.) QUE SEA DURO Y NO SEA SALADO
ONE DOLLAR OF CHEESE (.) IT SHOULD BE HARD AND NOT
SALTY)

This strategy, as observed in the shops where the data were collected, seems to ensure faster compliance.¹¹ Interestingly, as for Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) non-

verbal domain, which we do not deal with here, such requests were found to be produced at the threshold of the shop, before any verbal or non-verbal contact was established with the shopkeeper.

Finally, in terms of supportive moves, urgency can be explicitly added to the request, making it more forceful, as in (17):

- (17) [MS]
una poma de aceite lo más rápido que pueda
 a large container of oil **as fast as you^V can**

Two instances of this type of aggravation were found in the MS data and no instances in the QS corpus.

4.2 The discourse domain

Differences in the way Quiteños and Manteños open and close the interaction could also be observed in the analysis of the discourse domain, taken in the present study to mean the sequences in which the transaction is embedded. As many as 63 (92.6%) of the Quiteño interactions start, for instance, with a greeting or a greeting exchange, as in (18). However, only 18 (17.5%) of the Manteño interactions include a greeting or greeting exchange.

- (18) [QS]
 01 C *buenas días*
good morning
 02 SK *cómo está buenos días señor ()*
 how are you^V **good morning** Mr ()
 03 C *una leche semidescremada deme*
 give^V me one semi-skimmed milk

Additionally, in 25 or 36.76% of the QS interactions there are longer openings with how-are-you enquiries where these may be reinstated before the request is realized, as in (19):

- (19) [QS]
 01 C *buenos días*
 good morning
 02 SK *cómo está Sr Guerra buenos días*
how are you^V Mr Guerra good morning
 03 C *cómo le va*
how are you^V doing
 04 SK *bien no más usted*
 fine **and you^V**
 05 C *bien gracias*
 fine thanks

[Type text]

- 06 SK *cómo le ha ido*
how are things
- 07 C *bien*
fine
- 08 SK *sin novedades*
no news
- 09 C *nada nuevo (.) usted*
nothing new (.) **and you^V**
- 10 SK *igual igual en las mismas*
just the same just the same
- 11 C *sigue la bronca de esto de la Concordia*
the conflict in La Concordia continues
- 12 SK *eso seguirá largo*
that will carry on for a long time
- 13 C *regáleme una fundita vea qué vergüenza que es verle a ese ...*
let^V me have a bag^D it's so shameful to see that ...

In the Manteño corpus, how-are-you exchanges, as seen in the Quiteño Spanish data in (19), are rare. Only three instances (2.9%) were found; as such, in Manta, the transaction request normally comes in the client's first turn, that is, without an exchange of greetings or how-are-you inquiries, as in (20), or as in (21) where the client issues a greeting but does not leave room for a return greeting.

- (20) [MS]
01 C *medio cartón de Líder*
half a carton of Líder
- 02 SK *tome niña*
here you^V are niña [literally girl]
- (21) [MS]
01 C *buenas noches una cola de 50 de esa*
good evening one soft drink of 50 of that kind

The request may come in the customer's second turn when his/her first turn is occupied by an inquiry about the availability or price of a product as in (22):

- (22) [MS]
01 C *a cómo salen esos* [points to the product]
how much are those
- 02 SK *a treinta*
thirty each
- 03 C *deme uno*
give^V me one

By contrast, in the QS corpus, exchanges of greetings, which may combine two greetings proper or a greeting and a how-are-you inquiry, are found in 58 of the interactions.

In addition to making use of more conventional phatic exchanges in the form of greetings and how-are-you inquiries (see also farewells and welfare wishes below), Quiteños were found to engage in more individualized forms of small talk or positive rapport-building activities (Aston 1988), which include, amongst others, exchanges about health and politics, teasing, verbal play and joking. Instances of this kind of small talk were found in 29 (42.6 %) conversations in Quito, compared to four (3.9%) in Manta. Example (23) below illustrates an instance of teasing where the customers pretend not to see the bread or the milk in front of them:

- (23) [QS]
- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 01 | C | <i>buenos días</i>
good morning |
| 02 | SK | <i>buenos días llegó la alegría</i>
good morning joy has arrived |
| 03 | C1 | <i>señora tiene pan</i>
ma'am have you^v got bread |
| 04 | SK | no
no |
| 05 | C1 | <i>bien ((risas))</i>
fine ((laughter)) |
| 06 | C2 | <i>tiene leche ((risas))</i>
have you^v got milk ((laughter)) |
| 07 | SK | <i>si cómo les ha ido</i>
how have you been |

(Example taken from Placencia 2004: 233)

Verbal play, such as play with address forms and word play, is illustrated in (24) below. In this example, the name of the shopkeeper coincides with the name of the product requested:

- (24) [QS]
- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 01 | C | /buenos días/
/good morning/ |
| 02 | SK | /buenos días/ cómo está
/good morning/ how are you ^v |
| 03 | C | doña Rosita unas rositas
doña Rose^D some rose buns^D |
| 04 | SK | cuántas
how many |

(Example taken from Placencia 2004: 232)

Small talk or other forms of rapport-building, as indicated earlier, were found to be minimal in the Manteño corpus. One instance of joking is the following:

- (25) [MS]
[Type text]

- 01 C *un Belmont azul (.) tengo que fumar por las penas*
one blue Belmont (.) I have to smoke for my sorrows

As for closings, they mirror openings in both cases; in other words, they tend to be rather elaborate for Quiteños in a large number of cases and swift for Manteños. Example (26) below illustrates the occurrence of thank you utterances, farewells and welfare wishes in an interaction in Quito, while (27) illustrates a typical Manteño closing without these utterances.

- (26) [QS]
13 SK *tres ochenta y seis*
three eighty six
[customer pays]
14 SK *ya*
okay
15 C *gracias*
thank you
16 SK *a usted*
thanks to you^v
17 C *hasta luego no↑*
good bye okay↑
18 SK *hasta luego que pase bien*
good bye have^v a nice day
- (27) [MS]
04 C *cuánto cuesta*
how much does it cost
05 SK *treinta centavos*
thirty cents
06 C *deme dos*
give^v me two
[customer pays and leaves]

While not all closings in Quito are as elaborate as (26), thank you utterances, which appear to function as farewell utterances too, were found in 48 (70.6%) interactions, compared to 9 (8.7%) in Manta; explicit farewell utterances in 14 (20.6%) in Quito, compared to zero in Manta; and welfare wishes in 17 (25%) in Quito, also compared to zero in Manta. In 56 (82.3%) of the Quiteño interactions, compared to nine (8.7%) in Manta, at least one of these elements was found. In Manta, in most interactions (i.e., 94 or 91.3%), the closing is effected with the payment exchange as in (27) above.

Concerning thank you exchanges, it is interesting to see that a range of forms are employed in QS for both pair parts. The first thank you may be issued by the shopkeeper when he hands over any change due for a payment made, or by the customer when s/he receives any change due or when the transaction has been completed. *Gracias* 'thank you' was used by both shopkeepers and customers, and *muchas gracias* 'many thanks', *mil gracias* 'a

thousand thanks' and *Dios le pague* 'will God reward you' by customers only. The second pair part can take the form of *gracias también* 'thank you too' or *a usted* 'thanks to you' on the part of customers, or *ya* 'okay', *ya + address form* 'okay + address form', *a usted* 'thanks to you' or *no tiene de qué* 'it's nothing' on the part of the shopkeeper. Such a range does not seem to be used in the Manteño context, with *gracias* 'thank you' being the only first pair part employed, and normally not followed by a second pair part. There are only two instances of a thank you exchange in Manta (1.9%), compared to 21 in Quito (30.9%).

In examples such as (27) above in Manta, one may argue that perhaps the customer and shopkeeper do not know each other very well. However, there are instances in the Manteño corpus that show that there is a certain *confianza*¹² between the participants, as reflected in their use of address forms (e.g. *Borrachito* 'Drunkard^D') or the occurrence of small talk, where similar closings are found, as in the following example:

- (28) [MS]
 01 C *deme un belmón [Belmont] (.) se me van mañana a Guayaquil se van mañana*
 give^V me one Belmont (.) they are leaving tomorrow for Guayaquil they are leaving tomorrow
 [customer pays and leaves]

In this example, the piece of information the customer gives to the shopkeeper (not explicitly mentioned in the interaction) is about a group of nuns in his school going away the following day. It shows that there is shared knowledge, and therefore some degree of closeness between the participants who seem to exchange personal information. It is possible, precisely because of this familiarity, that they do not need to formally close the interaction by saying thank you or goodbye. Wolfson (1988) suggested that relations where there is not much distance or intimacy between the participants (i.e., those in what she calls the "bulge") require more inter-personal work compared to those where there is distance or intimacy. In this respect, and as suggested for corner shop interactions in Madrid (Placencia 2005), relationships with the shopkeeper in Manta also appear to be outside of Wolfson's (1988) bulge, similar to those among intimates that do not require much interpersonal work.

4.3 The stylistic domain

The tone of the interaction as reflected in participants' choice of (in)formal address forms, greetings and politeness formulas, as well as in relation to the use of rapport-building activities, is considered here as part of Spencer-Oatey's stylistic domain.

[Type text]

One similarity between the two groups is their distinct preference for the use of the formal pronoun of address *usted*, implicit in the verb form in (29), and respectful address terms such as *señor/a*, as also in this example, or *niño/a* in (30). The latter form appears in the Manteño corpus only:¹³

(29) [QS]
03 C *cuatro panes señora Mariúta hágame el favour*
four bread rolls Mrs Maria^D 'do^V me the favour'

(30) [MS]
01 C *niña deme un café*
niña [literally child] give^V me one [jar of] coffee

Concerning address terms, however, one difference these examples illustrate is that while Quiteño customers, like Manteño customers, show distance and respect through the choice of forms such as *señora*, they often also construct the relationship as familiar and somewhat close. They do so by employing, in addition to these terms, a first name which is often diminutivised, as in (29) above thus conveying some affection or what Flórez's (1975) terms *simpatía*. This is generally not the case in the Manteño context despite the fact that participants also know one another through regularity of contact. Leaving aside impersonal formal address occurring on its own (e.g. *señor/a* 'mister/madam') personal forms such as first name (+ diminutive), abbreviated first name (+ diminutive), title + name/surname and a range of terms of endearment were found in 48 (70.6%) of the Quiteño interactions, compared to seven (6.8%) in Manta. Additionally, in Quito, the conveyance of *simpatía* was found to be reinforced through the repetition of the address form two or three times throughout the interaction, or through the occurrence of more than one form within the same interaction.

Some of the address terms employed in Quito display the use of individualized rapport-building strategies such as linguistic play (cf. De Klerk & Bosch 1999) with names (e.g. *Sebas*^C abbreviated form of *Sebastián*) embedded in conventional exchanges. Participants use these to mark affection/*simpatía*. In so doing, they construct the relationship as personal and somewhat close. Nevertheless, formal forms were also employed sometimes in a joking manner so it was important to consider the co-text in determining their rapport value. In (31) below, the customer addresses the shopkeeper twice employing a name abbreviation + diminutive (*Sebitas*^{CD}), whereas he uses *señor* 'Mister' in the closing. From the co-text, it can be seen that this formal form is being used in a playful manner:

(31) [QS]
01 SK *cómo estás Luis*
how are you^T Luis
... 08 C *gracias Sebitas*
thanks Sebitas^{CD}
... 14 C *gracias Sebitas ...*

...	19	C	thanks Sebitas ^{CD} <i>chao señor</i> bye Mister
	20	SK	<i>chao que te vaya bien</i> bye I hope things go well for you ^T

With respect to greetings, it was noted in the previous section that exchanges of greetings are more common in the QS context. As for the choice of greeting, formal forms such as *buenos días* ‘good morning’ occurred in both datasets but in Manta there were also instances of the abbreviated form *buenas*, which is a less formal form than *buenas tardes/noches* ‘good afternoon/good evening’ so there seems to be less formality in the Manteño context in this respect.

It was also noted previously that while Manteños seem to have *por favor* in their repertoire only for standard corner shop transactions, Quiteños have a wider range of formulas in theirs. The formulas they use go from the neutral (*por favor* ‘please’) to the deferential (e.g. *tenga la bondad* ‘have the kindness/be kind enough’). Manteños, on the other hand, do not seem to mark respect through the choice of deferential politeness formulas. In this, Manteños behaviour also appears to be closer to that of Madrileños (cf. Placencia 2005).

In relation to openings and closings, it was noted that Quiteños invest more effort than Manteños in conventional phatic exchanges to open and close the transaction. In addition, more individualized forms of rapport-building by means of which solidarity is constructed are found in other sections of the interaction in the Quiteño corpus.

In brief, Quiteños appear to display more interpersonal concerns than Manteños in their corner shop transactions, creating a more personalized style of interaction. Quiteños’ style in this context can be categorized as more person-oriented than that of Manteños, the latter which appears to be more task-oriented. Person-orientedness is defined by Fant (1995: 198) as paying attention to the persons with whom you interact, whereas task-orientedness denotes focusing on getting the task accomplished. Manteños, like Madrileños, can be regarded as more task-oriented than Quiteños. This task-orientedness can be identified not only from the scarcity of relational talk, but also from the speed of the interaction. In contrast to Quiteños, Manteños seem to be constantly in a hurry and to want to speed up the transaction, doing without many of the preambles that Quiteños employ.

4.4 The participatory domain

Two features concerning aspects of turn-taking were noted in the analysis of the participatory domain. Firstly, in both datasets the shopkeepers were not infrequently found to serve more than one customer at the time, that is, a turn-taking pattern of A–B–A–B is not always observed. The following is one example of three customers embedded in one interaction with the shopkeeper:

[Type text]

- (32) [QS] Santiago = C1 Paquito = C2 Another male customer = C3
- 01 SK *qué fue Paquito (0.2) cómo estás ↑*
how are things going Paco^D (0.2) how are you^{T↑}
- 02 C1 *ya don Sebas daráme ()*
okay don SebasC giveV me ()
- 03 SK *ya Santiago (.) qué más Paquito*
okay Santiago (.) what's new Paco^D
- 04 C2 *dame unos tres panes de: de agüita [pequeños]*
give^T me some three bread rolls wa: water^D ones small ones
- 05 SK *[de agüita↑] sí hay de éstos también*
water^D ones↑ yes there are these other too
- 06 C1 *dos dije vea*
I said two don't^V forget
- 07 SK *ah para usted también↑ [to Santiago]*
oh for you^V too↑ [to Santiago]
- 08 C1 *claro*
certainly
- 09 SK *ya [to Santiago]*
okay [to Santiago]
- 10 C2 *deme unos tres de éstos*
give^V me some three of those
- 11 SK *tres de éstos*
three of these
- 12 C2 *unos cuatro de éstos también*
some four of those too
- 13 SK *uno dos tres cuatro*
one two three four
- 14 C2 *deme uno de dulce*
give^V me one sweet one
- 15 SK *es que ojo justo el último*
look it's the very lasts one
- 16 C2 *((risas))*
((laughter))
- 17 SK *el último de dulce*
the last sweet one
- 18 C3 *deme un malboro light don Sebas*
give^V me one Marlborough Light Don Sebastián^C
- 19 SK *ya*
okay
- 20 C3 *una cola también ()*
a coke too ()
- 21 SK *qué más Paquito*
what else Paco^D
- 22 C2 *nada más El Comercio*
nothing else El Comercio

Such a pattern of interaction could be taken as an orientation to Hall's (1989) polychronism, in that the shopkeeper interacts simultaneously with more than

one participant, rather than in a linear way which would be characteristic of monochronic cultures.

On the other hand, a phenomenon identified only in the Manteño corpus, which relates to example (16) above, is that some customers did not attempt to engage with the shopkeeper through greetings or eye contact, but simply shouted their request as they came into the shop, normally succeeding in interrupting ongoing interactions. This, however, seemed to be male behaviour only, and this is a topic that needs further investigation.

5. Summary and conclusions

The analysis presented here shows that there are some similarities in the way Quiteños and Manteños carry out their transactions in corner shop interactions in relation to three specific domains (the illocutionary, the stylistic and the participatory domains): direct forms and formal pronominal address forms are preferred in both contexts and there is some orientation to polychronism in turn-taking. However, some differences were found in both the illocutionary and the discourse domains in particular, but also in the stylistic and participatory domains. As far as the illocutionary domain is concerned, a great deal more internal modification was found in the realization of the request in the Quiteño corpus compared to the Manteño corpus. On the other hand, aggravating devices were only found in the Manteño corpus. With respect to the discourse domain, longer preambles and closings were found in QS, as well as more focus on the person, whereas there seemed to be more focus on the task in MS. In relation to the stylistic domain, less formality was found in MS with respect to choice of greetings and politeness formulas. Finally, with respect to the participatory domain, only a small number of Manteño customers were found to proceed to the transaction before engaging the shopkeeper's attention through verbal or nonverbal means.

In brief, the findings from this study suggest that Quiteños and Manteños do not operate according to similar norms of interaction. The Quiteños approach the encounter in a more personalized way and also reflect a perception of the transaction as being more of an imposition, requiring more interpersonal work. Manteños, as suggested earlier, seem to be more task oriented, engaging in little or no interpersonal work. In this way their behaviour resembles more that of Madrileños rather than Quiteños in a similar context (cf. Placencia 2005).

To sum up, given the differences encountered, this study suggests the need to examine intra-cultural variation within broad varieties (of Spanish) perhaps before generalizations about national cultures are made. More studies on corner shop and other interactions in different socio-economic sectors in both Quito and Manta (and other areas of the Ecuadorian Andes and Coastal region) are

[Type text]

needed. It would also be of interest to explore differences that seem to be gender-related, such as the use of some of the aggravating devices considered here in relation to the Manteño corpus, as well as variation relating to age, which may be relevant for the analysis of small talk, for example.

Notes

1. This paper was presented at the 9th International Pragmatics Association Conference, Riva del Garda, July 10–15, 2005. María Yépez and the volume editors are to be thanked for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper. I would also like to thank the University of London (University of London Central Research Fund) for their financial assistance in carrying out the present study.
2. In many shops nowadays there are security cameras installed which can facilitate the collection of video data for analysis (see, for example, Bailey 1997). This facility was not available in the corner shops employed in the present study.
3. Fant and his colleagues (cf. Fant 1995) based a number of cross-cultural studies on business negotiations carried out in the 1990s on simulations collected for the training of negotiators. In other words, the negotiations were not recorded for the purposes of linguistic research. On the naturalness continuum, this kind of data would, for example, be closer to naturally occurring data than role plays as employed within sociopragmatics. These data were gathered without the researcher's involvement and the participants were familiar with the situation and the roles they had to play as they were already negotiators.
4. Kerbrat-Orechioni's (2005) remarks relate to the use of elicitation methods in general. She, nevertheless, acknowledges their value when she says that elicitation methods can "highlight a number of pertinent facts" (2005: 29). This is a view we share.
5. The reader is referred to the work of Mitchel (1957) and Traverso (2001). They, as well as other scholars, have highlighted how the setting in service encounters determines to a large extent the type and amount of verbal exchanges that occur, including relational talk. Self-service shops, for example, often involve very little talk.
6. The approximate age of the participants was noted down through non-participant observation of the interactions. Participants were classified into the following categories: young adults (20–35), middle-aged participants (36–55), older participants (56–65) and elderly participants (66–80). The original corpus for the Quiteño study (Placencia 2004) also includes interactions with children and adolescents. These interactions were not included in the present study.
7. See appendix for transcription conventions. Please note that the utterances have been translated somewhat literally from Spanish into English to enable the reader to understand the strategies employed by participants better.
8. "Elliptical sentence forms" is the term which Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) use to refer to what we call here quasi-imperatives, a sub-category of Blum-Kulka et al.'s mood derivable. According to these authors, the prototypical form of mood derivable is the imperative, but "functional equivalents such as infinite forms and elliptical sentence structures express the same directness level" (1989: 279).
9. A future study based on a larger corpus could test the statistical significance of the differences encountered across sub-varieties, and within each corpus, in relation to the sex of the participants, for example, a factor, which, as indicated, was not taken into account in this study.
10. Interestingly, vagueness, imprecision or underspecification have been described as features of the communicative style of the Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican community (Morris 1981).

11. This is a feature that García (2002) observed in relation to Venezuelan Spanish in the context of coffee shop interactions.
12. A relationship of *confianza* is one “based on trust, affection, and a choice to be interpersonally connected to another human” (Fitch 1991: 260).
13. *Niño/a* was described by various Manteño shopkeepers as a respectful form of address. Some also remarked that they used this form to keep distance from their clients to avoid “acquiring *confianza*” (*para que no tomen confianza* ‘so that they do not get too friendly’), that is, so that they do not become too close and possibly start making demands on them. Relations of *confianza* come attached with rights and obligations (cf. Fitch 1991).

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Appendix: Conventions employed

//	overlapping talk
()	inaudible or unclear utterance
[]	where extra-linguistic behavior takes place (e.g. shopkeeper wraps up product)
↑	rising intonation
(.)	pause between 0.01 and 0.03 seconds.
!	utterance produced as an exclamation
ḍ	diminutive
c	name or address form contraction
you ^v	'you' formal in the singular
you ^T	'you' informal in the singular
...	more talk preceding or following a turn

CAPITAL LETTERS mark increased volume