Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics

edited by

John Kyle
Stacey Stowers

Volume 25
2000

Partial funding for this journal is provided by the
Graduate and Professional Association of the University of Kansas

ISSN 1043-3805

Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics

Volume 25
2000

Part I

Part II: Studies in Native American Languages XI

Forms Of Address In The Popular Press: A Comparison of Spain, Mexico and the United States

Laura Callahan
University of California, Berkeley

Abstract: Address pronouns and their semantic implications have been the subject of numerous studies since Brown and Gilman (1960). Forms of address reflect relationships of aymmetry and symmetry, and advertisers' practices in regard to second-person pronoun usage hold interest for at least two reasons. First, they can serve as evidence for changes in speech community norms. Second, they can show how advertisers attempt to manipulate consumers through metaphoric appeals to the domains and contexts associated with each form of address. A comparison of forms of address in magazines and newspapers in Spain, Mexico, and the United States reveals certain correlations with speech patterns in those three countries, as well as with the products and services advertised.

Introduction

The use of different forms of address depending on the social status of and relationship between speaker and addressee is a linguistic universal. One of the ways such status is reflected is in the choice of second-person pronouns. The manifestation of address distinctions via a pronominal system is characteristic of numerous languages worldwide. English is no longer one of these languages, but a division was maintained between formal and informal paradigms into the 17th century and in some dialects later.

The body of literature on social differentiation in address pronouns reflects the wide scope of this practice. For their seminal study in 1960, Brown and Gilman investigated second-person pronoun usage in French, German, Italian,

and Spanish. Much work has followed, with further analyses of European languages as well as investigations into the address systems of Asian and African languages. Key concepts in the field of address forms are power and solidarity, distance or deference and intimacy, and formality and informality.

Power, distance and deference are associated with formality; in the case of Spanish, this generally translates into the use of *usted*. Such usage may be non-reciprocal; i.e. the person who is addressed as *usted* because of his or her superior status may choose to address the interlocutor who has less power as *tú*. Distance and deference are commonly expressed with *usted*, whether or not this correlates to the actual status and relationship of the speakers. Solidarity and intimacy, with concurrent implications of equality and closeness, most often result in reciprocal use of the more informal *tú*.

Pronominal choices vary by speech community. Accordingly, studies of Spanish focus on different regions and different socioeconomic groups within those regions, as shown in the following partial list: Blas Arroyo (1995; Spain), Castro-Mitchell (1991; Honduras), Jaramillo (1990, 1995; New Mexico), Keller (1974; New York City), Lastra de Suárez (1972; Mexico City), Molina (1993; Madrid), Rey (1994; Colombia, Honduras, and Nicaragua), Schwenter (1993: Spain and Mexico), Solé (1970; Argentina, Peru, and Puerto Rico), Torrejón (1986; Chile), Uber (1985; Colombia). Two studies that describe Spanish language usage in more general terms are Marín (1972) and Solé (1978).[1]

The majority of research on pronominal systems focuses on speech. What studies that have been done on written use in any language concentrate on literary texts. To the best of my knowledge, no articles have been published on pronoun usage in advertising. Such usage holds interest for at least two reasons. First, it can serve as evidence for changes in speech community norms. Second, it can show how advertisers attempt to manipulate consumers through metaphoric appeals to the domains and contexts associated with each form of address.

The familiar and formal second person pronouns in Spanish, *tú* and *usted*, are both used to address the public in the Spanish language print media.[2] The use of a pronoun is in many cases optional, but even when none appears, the degree of formality is still signalled by concordant verb forms and possesive adjectives. In some advertising, direct address is avoided altogether by the use of passive, infinitival or nominalized verbs along with elimination of the possesive or substitution of the definite article. This results in a more formal, or sometimes simply more neutral, register, which in and of itself may serve to set the item apart from advertising using the more intimate *tú*. The data for this study include only those advertisements that show an explicit marker for either *tú* or *usted*, whether that be an actual pronoun, a concordant verb form or a possessive adjective. Ads with markers for *vosotros* or *ustedes* were counted with *tú* and *usted*, respectively. It might be argued that this would mask usage intended as informal in the U.S. and Mexican data, since *ustedes* serves as plural for both *tú* and *usted* in American Spanish, but the proportion of second person plural forms was not large enough to warrant a separate category. The vast majority of ads address a single person.

In a comparison between Spain and Mexico, Schwenter (1993) found a higher frequency overall of *tú* usage in Spain. During my own travels there (1997 and 1999; Barcelona, Bilbao, Madrid, Santiago de Compostela), I both witnessed and received more informal address than I have during several years of Spanish language interactions at home in San José, California. My hypothesis is that this difference will be reflected in a higher use of *tú* in Spanish print advertising. I expect Mexican usage to favor *usted* more, although whether instances of the formal usage will outnumber uses of *tú* remains to be seen.

Which form of address will prevail in the Spanish language and bilingual press in the United States is an open question. Much of the advertising in this arena comes from translations of English language publicity, a factor which is also present in international advertising. Spanish manifests the results of its contact with English in the United States in lexical and syntactic borrowings from the latter. Will a higher usage in advertising of the informal pronoun *tú* appear as another consequence of this contact? Or, more in line with my own

casual observations, will the Latino press in the United States exhibit a preference for the use of *usted*?

From Speech to Print

As mentioned above, the majority of investigations into the use of address pronouns have concentrated on speech, and usage varies between speech communities. The mass media is less subject to dialectal variations, and in some cases serves to neutralize them. In addition to socioeconomic class, age and sex can also influence pronominal choice, and those factors will be considered in this paper.

Advertising language does not replicate speech exactly, but it does have features in common with oral style. Along with face-to-face conversation, it belongs to a register which has an interpersonal focus, as opposed to primarily content or informational, focus (Leckie-Tarry 1995: 40-44). Ads employ direct address and exhortation in an effort to persuade readers (Delbecque and Leuven 1990: 208; Sánchez Corral 1991: 136-137). To encourage consumers to identify with their product, advertisers try to approximate the language of their target audience (Smith 1982: 193).

As stated above, inherent to the dynamic of pronominal use are considerations of asymmetry and symmetry. In my study this factor is not overtly present, because the addressee—the public—does not actively participate in the interaction. The addressee's future participation is invited, but we can only speculate as to which form this will take.[3] *Usted* can indicate asymmetrical power, or symmetrical distance and deference.[4] *Tú* may convey asymmetrical condescension, or symmetrical solidarity (Solé 1978: 941). For the latter pronoun, only one of its connotations figures in advertising. It is doubtful that those in charge of public relations would want to openly express condescension toward potential customers. In the case of *usted*, it is conceivable that advertisers might wish to highlight the power of the client as opposed to their own. However, a stance of mutual deference would be equally valid.

By its very nature, public address implies communication with a stranger. This in turn suggests distance, a lack of intimacy. It is this distance that some advertisers attempt to bridge with the use of the informal *tú*. Where *usted* is used, the motivation may come from a calculated desire to show respect, often with a connection to the type of product and its intended buyers.

Methodology

Advertisements for the first two analyses were taken from Spanish, Mexican and United States newspapers and magazines sold or distributed free in bookstores and newsstands in the San Francisco Bay Area, California. It should be noted that, with the exception of the free local newspapers—which contribute a very small portion of the U.S. data—the same range of publications is available in other markets. The Spanish titles are the same as those available in Spain, the Mexican titles in Mexico, and the United States titles in other parts of the U.S. Some publications have multinational distribution; in such cases the country in which the magazine was published was used to assign it to a category.

For the first two analyses, three hundred samples were gathered from twenty-six sources; one hundred from publications originating in each of the three countries. Five different magazines, along with one magazine from the first corpus, were used for the third analysis. Seven additional magazines were consulted for the fourth analysis.[5]

The data for all three countries come from an assorted range of publications. In order to avoid extremes with regard to target audiences, publications aimed solely at youth, such as popular music or teen fashion magazines, were excluded from the corpus. The decision to do so was made after preliminary examination of such media revealed an exceptionless use of *tú*. However, age will still be taken into account in the analyses, as it is one of the basic factors in the decision to use *tú* or *usted*. While exceptions do exist, the most common unmarked form of address directed at children and youth is *tú*.

An effort was made to avoid repetition in the data. Therefore, only one example was taken from each global advertising campaign, although the same promotion may have appeared in numerous publications. It should also be noted that the number of ads per publication was uneven. Some contained only one or two instances of any advertisement or exhortation, while others had full page promotions on every other page. There are some advertisements in which both forms of address are used. A typical case involves the use of one form in the main body of the text, with the other form appearing at the bottom, usually in fine print. Examples are trademarked slogans and government warnings on alcohol and cigarettes. In such cases, the form used to address the reader in the main portion of the copy is the one used to categorize the ad for this study.

In the first analysis, percentages of each usage were compared between countries. In the second, the use of *tú* versus *usted* was calculated within categories of the type of product or service being advertised. In the third, six magazines were selected on the basis of their target audience's gender, to discover if one form of address predominated over the other within each publication. The fourth analysis is a diachronic version of the first, in which the percentage of each form of address in issues of magazines dating from twenty to twenty-five years ago was calculated for a country to country comparison.

Analysis 1

The results of the country to country comparison are shown in Table 1. As predicted, examples of informal address outnumber the formal in Spain. The Mexican use of formal address is higher in comparison with that of Spain, but it does not dominate within the country. The United States figures offer a surprise. Showing, albeit coincidentally, precisely the opposite distribution from that of Spain, they exhibit a higher preference for formality in comparison with Mexico. The exactness of opposition between Spain and the United States, coupled with the relatively even Mexican distribution, results in a level average of the three countries overall: 52% for *tú* and 48% for *usted*.

A tendency for speakers from lower socioeconomic classes and non-urban backgrounds to use more *usted* has been noted in previous studies (Keller 1974: 58; Lastra de Suárez 1972: 214; Marín 1972: 907).[6] Given the preponderance of immigrants from rural, less affluent areas among Spanish-speakers in the United States (Morales 1999: 256), perhaps the higher rate of formal address found in this country's data is not surprising. As stated above, the advertiser's goal of persuasion encourages adaptation to the preference of the target audience.

	Spain	Mexico	United States
Tú	65% (65)	55% (55)	35% (35)
Usted	35% (35)	45% (45)	65% (65)

Table 1. Use of *Tú* vs. *Usted* Between Countries

Analysis 2

The form of address used in connection to the type of product or service being advertised is tabulated in Table 2. The entire corpus was divided into categories consisting of general classifications of related items. The contents of each category are as follows:

A. Arts and Entertainment: film, music, television, performance; products and events
B. Business: business services and products, legal and financial services, real estate
C. Cars: motor vehicles, auto insurance, gasoline

D. Charity and Non-Profit: appeals for donations, public service announcements
E. Clothing and Miscellaneous Accessories: clothes, watches, pens, portable telephones
F. Editorial Communication: subscriptions, contests, editorial instructions or comments directed at readers
G. Education and Employment: books, educational products and programs, employment offers
H. Food: food, alcohol and cigarettes
I. Health and Beauty: cosmetics, perfume, over the counter remedies, hygiene and diet products
J. Personal and Psychic Services: telephone predictions, products promising to improve luck, relationships, sexual prowess
K. Travel: travel agencies, train and airline service

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Tú	(16)	(4)	(10)	(9)	(23)	(32)	(12)	(12)	(27)	(7)	(3)
	62%	19%	56%	53%	66%	58%	44%	75%	47%	37%	33%
Ud.	(10)	(17)	(8)	(8)	(12)	(23)	(15)	(4)	(30)	(12)	(6)
	38%	81%	44%	47%	34%	42%	56%	25%	53%	63%	67%

Table 2. *Tú* vs. *Usted* in Relation to Type of Product or Service

There is a fairly even distribution in five of the product categories: C, D, F, G and I. Of the remaining six, three—categories B, J, and K—show a preponderance of the formal address, and the other three—categories A, E, and H—of the informal. Although some of these figures may be a reflection of the diversity of data sources, certain hypotheses can be put forward.

The products advertised in categories A, E and H, in which *tú* appears in two thirds to three fourths of the total, represent relatively frequent purchases. In addition, the buyer in many cases is likely to be a person in the 18-24 year-old age bracket. There are of course some items which would be a common purchase for someone of any age, but in category A especially and for the luxury items of category H a youth market is targeted. Another factor to consider is that the products in all three groups can be seen as potential gifts, and are in many cases presented as such. The buying of gifts often suggests a certain atmosphere of intimacy or festiveness, which in turn lends itself to an informal tone.

Conversely, the products advertised in category B, in which *usted* predominates, are of a more serious nature. They typically involve larger sums of money, and they are long-term, planned purchases, as opposed to what may be incidental, non-essential items. Category K includes items that could in some cases be considered ancillary to business services. Also, travel is more expensive than any of the items advertised in A, E and H.

Category J deals with items of a delicate nature. They may be the object of social ridicule if not stigma; accordingly, some of the ads contain promises of confidentiality. Consumers literally maintain a certain distance from the suppliers, as these are typically telephone or mail-order products. The desire for an item in this category is an admission of the need for help, which for many equates to weakness. Not only is it an expression of the need for help, but help in a highly personal aspect of life. In addition, the type of assistance offered in these ads does not enjoy the acceptance of mainstream society. Therefore, consumers may be especially sensitive to cues signalling respect, or the lack thereof. Advertisers, realizing this, address potential clients in a formal way to emphasize their dignity and thus gain their confidence. In effect, they anticipate the loss of face to be suffered from an expression of interest in their product, and attempt to help the other party maintain or regain some of this face (Fasold 1990: 164).

Analysis

Table 3 shows the results of the third analysis, the object of which was to see if there might be any correlation between the gender of the magazine's target audience and a preference in the advertising and editorial address for either *tú* or *usted*.[7]

Male Target Audience	Spain *GQ España*	Mexico *Mecánica Popular*	United States *Sólo Soccer*
tú	100%	12%	∅
usted	∅	88%	100%
Female Target Audience	*Ragazza*	*Kena: Fiestas Infantiles*	*Vanidades*
tú	100%	36%	22%
usted	∅	64%	78%

Table 3. *Tú* vs. *usted* in Relation to Gender of Magazine's Target Audience

The country of origin still appears to be a very influential factor. There is unanimous use of *tú* in Spain, and *usted* is preferred in Mexico and the United States. A comparison of Analysis 3 with Analysis 1, however, reveals a wider gap between the two forms in the latter two countries. In both Mexico and the United States, the balance in this sample inclines more sharply toward *usted* than it does in the larger corpus. But at the same time there is a noticeably higher usage of *tú* in the women's magazines than in the men's. This may reflect the tendency, at least in the United States, for women to receive first name address even in the absence of any genuine intimacy (Lakoff 1975: 80).

While it is possible to call a person by first name in Spanish without using *tú*, the reverse would be improbable (Solé 1978: 942). Calling someone *tú* implies that one might also address that individual by first name, although such a relationship may be non-reciprocal.

Analysis 4

A diachronic analysis reveals a more or less level field between the three countries twenty to twenty-five years ago. In each one the use of *tú* is relatively low.[8] Results are shown in Table 4.

	Spain *Cambio 16* 1975 *Destino* 1979	Mexico *Siempre!* 1978 *Vuelta* 1979 *Proceso* 1979	United States *Gráfica* 1978 *Temas* 1977
Tú	6%	10%	8%
Usted	94%	90%	92%

Table 4. *Tú* vs. *usted* 20+ Years Ago

As a comparison with Table 1 shows, major changes have taken place over the past two decades. A dramatic shift has ocurred in Spain, with its modern day prevalence of *tú*. *Cambio 16* and *Destino* resemble the newsmagazines *Time* or *Newsweek*. The two ads featuring informal address are for shaving lotion and deodorant. *Proceso* and *Siempre!*, also newsmagazines, include ads for the national lottery, tourism and liquor. *Vuelta* is a literary review magazine, in which publicity consists largely of ads for books, art exhibits and other cultural events. In the Mexican data, the three promotions using *tú* advertise Mexicana airlines, an institution offering counseling and other

services to adolescents, and a children's television channel. *Gráfica* and *Temas*, both of which feature articles on fashion, news and entertainment, contain advertising for local businesses in addition to promotions for the Army, liquor and educational programs. The ads responsible for the informal address in this data sample are a double page spread for American Airlines, and, perhaps of most significance, a self-diagnostic test directed at young women on *'cómo descubrir el hombre de tu vida'* (*Temas*).

My present day data show that, albeit at a less dramatic rate than in Spain, the use of *tú* in Mexico has made steady progress, a movement in which the United States follows. Jaramillo reports on a microcosm of this situation in her study of New Mexican Spanish. She acknowledges the rise in informal usage, noting at the same time the durability of the formal mode of address (1995: 217).

Conclusions

My analyses point to some general correlations between the commodity advertised and the form of address chosen. Promotional campaigns intended for children and young people almost invariably use *tú*. There was also some correspondence between the informal mode and items for personal consumption, but this was not universal; it is most noticeable in Analysis 4, in which any use of *tú* stands out. In the same analysis, airline travel offers two instances of informal address, while there is a tendency for this category to prefer *usted* in the present day data of analysis 2.

A strong incidence of one pronoun may suggest a general preference in a region, without necessarily reflecting the norms of every speech community within that area. This appears to be the case in Spain. Its political history offers an important reason for its hold on first place in the frequency of informal address.[9] While political and social upheaval has also occurred in Mexico and the United States in this century, no change so abrupt as the shift from Franco's dictatorship to democracy twenty-five years ago has taken place.

Points raised in this study deserve further scrutiny. Multinational promotional campaigns contribute to a homogeneity of advertising style. It would be interesting to discover whether certain publications have policies with regard to the usage of *tú* or *usted* which advertisers must follow, or vice versa—do advertising agencies impose their style on magazines and newspapers? Future investigations could involve more Spanish-speaking nations, with comparisons done between Spain and the United States and various countries in Central and South America. A cross-linguistic study could compare advertising in Spanish-speaking countries with other nations in which a language that has address distinctions is spoken. Of ultimate interest would be to see to what degree the speech of advertisers' target audiences is reflected in print, and to what degree promotional language appears to be innovative in its forms of address.

NOTES

[1] Rey (1994: 193-195) provides a useful summary of these and other studies on the pronouns of address in Spanish. Schwenter (1993) offers helpful criticism of some previous investigations' conclusions.

[2] The terms 'informal' and 'formal' will be used synonymously with *tú* and *usted* throughout this paper.

[3] There are some instances in which we have a chance to observe the pronoun choice supplied by the advertiser for use by the client. This is the case where an order form with boxes for the customer to check is provided: 'Yes, please send me...'. Here the pronominal use in the main body of the advertising copy is usually repeated. Naturally, having been selected for the figurative speaker, i.e. the customer, by someone else, this offers no positive indication as to which pronoun the customer might actually use in a face-to-face exchange.

[4] There are some countries, Colombia for example, where *usted* is used to express solidarity, while *tú* may connote distance. See Uber (1985) and Rey (1994).

[5] For bibliographic information and a brief description of each publication, see the Appendix.

[6] This tendency is not limited to Spanish. See Lambert (1967).

[7] The selection of magazines by target audience gender was based in part on stereotypical associations with subject matter; for example sports (*Sólo Soccer*) and cars (*Mecánica Popular*), as opposed to tips on diet (*Vanidades*) and planning children's parties (*Kena: Fiestas Infantiles*). Also taken into account were semi-erotic photos likely to appeal to the opposite sex (*GQ*, *Ragazza*).

[8] At the same time, it is interesting to note that in Mexico in 1972 Lastra de Suárez reports an increase in the reciprocal use of *tú* in many contexts, including in conversations between buyers and sellers (215).

[9] The preference for *tú* in post-dictatorship Spain is similar to situations that obtained in post-revolutionary France and Russia, as well as in neighboring Portugal. *Usted* became tainted with negative connotations when Franco's rule ended. *Tú* expressed the egalitarianism of the new age (Brown and Gilman 1960: 265). There was a brief period of precedent for the mutual *tú* of egalitarianism during the Spanish Civil War (Keller 1974: 51).

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Mexico

Alarma! 404 (28 Jan. 1999). Tabloid-style newspaper. Coverage of real news stories but with a slightly sensationalist aspect.

La Jornada. 5175 (31 Jan. 1999). Major daily newspaper.

Kena. 184 (Oct. 1998). Monthly. Food, fashion, family and entertainment world.

Mujer Nueva. (Jan. 1999). Monthly. Beauty, health and fashion.

Muy Interesante. XVI-1 (Dec. 1998). Science for the non-scientific reader. Similar to *National Geographic*.

Proceso. 1158 (10 Jan. 1999). Weekly newsmagazine. Similar to *Time, Newsweek*.

Quehacer Político. 906 (16 Jan. 1999). Weekly. Politics, activism.

Somos. 3-25 (1999). Monthly.Entertainment news.

United States

Américas. 51-1 (Jan.-Feb. 1999). Bi-monthly publication of Organization of American States. Cultural, geographic.

Casa y Estilo Internacional. V-24 (No year given; c. 1998/99). Similar to *Hom and Garden*.

Cinemanía. 1-2 (Feb. 1999). Monthly. Movie reviews.

Cristina La Revista. 9-1 (Jan. 1999). Fashion, entertainment personalities.

Estylo. 3-1 (Feb. 1999). Bilingual. Self-description: 'celebrity, beauty, fashion and lifestyle.'

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APPENDIX: BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE DATA

Analyses 1& 2

Spain

ABC. (31 Jan. 1999). Major daily newspaper.

Blanco y Negro. 4153 (31 Jan. 1999). Weekly supplement to *ABC*. Entertainment.

Cambio 16. 1417 (29 Jan. 1999). Weekly newsmagazine. Similar to *Time* or *Newsweek*.

Elle. 148 (Jan. 1999). Monthly. Fashion, beauty and entertainment.

¡Hola! 2842 (28 Jan. 1999). Coverage of political and entertainment personalities.

Líder. 32 (Dec. 1998). Monthly. Sports.

Qué Leer. 3-28 (Dec. 1998). Monthly. Book reviews, interviews.

Ragazza. 111 (Jan. 1999). Monthly. Fashion, beauty and entertainment.

Latina. 3-8 (Feb. 1999). Bilingual. Health, beauty, fashion, practical advice, Latina role models.

El Mensajero. 12-39 (3 Feb. 1999). Weekly newpaper. General and news of interest to the Latino community.

Nuevo Mundo. (5 feb. 1999). Weekly supplement to the San Jose Mercury News. General and news of interest to the Latino community.

El Observador. IXIX-5 (4 Feb.-11 Feb. 1999). Weekly newpaper. General and news of interest to the Latino community.

People en español. (Feb. 1999). Monthly. Similar to *People* in English.

Analysis 3

Spain

GQ España. 31(Jan.-Feb. 1999). Similar to *GQ* in English: men's fashion, semi-erotic photos of women.

Ragazza. 111. (Jan. 1999). Fashion, beauty and entertainment.

Mexico

Kena: Fiestas Infantiles. 19 (Aug. 1998). Special edition; children's party planning.

Mecánica Popular. 52-1 (Jan. 1999). Similar to *Popular Mechanics*.

United States

Sólo Soccer. 4-8 (1998). Sports.

Vanidades. 39-3 (27 Jan. 1999). Fashion, beauty and entertainment.

Analysis 4

Spain

Cambio 16. 173 (31 Mar.-6 April 1975). Newsmagazine.

Destino. 2177-78 (27 June-3 July, 4-10 July 1979) News, politics, interviews, editorials.

Mexico

Proceso. 119-20 (12,19 Feb. 1979), 141-43 (16,23,30 July 1979) Newsmagazine.

Siempre! 1307 (12 July 1978). Newsmagazine.

Vuelta. 33 (Aug. 1979). Literary magazine.

United States

Gráfica. 31-203-3/4 (1978) Fashion, news and entertainment.

Temas. 76-320 (30 Oct. 1977) Fashion, news and entertainment.