

ALS Abstract

Address in Spanish in an Australian context

Jo-anne Hughson

This paper presents an overview of the findings of a doctoral thesis examining the usage of address pronouns by Spanish speakers from various national backgrounds living in an Australian immigrant situation, and with a focus on interactions between Spanish speakers from different countries. Address pronoun paradigms are one of the primary features appealed to when categorising Spanish into different varieties and, as a result, a large body of studies on address exists for the numerous national varieties of this pluricentric language. The approach taken in this study casts address behaviour in the Spanish language in a new light, however, through the implementation of a nontraditional (triangulated) methodology, with a strong qualitative focus. In addition, the research was conducted in Australia. This made it possible to examine how the language contact situation with English impacted address usage, and also how convergence patterns might develop between varieties of Spanish in a context where the dominant or national language is not Spanish, and where it might be argued that there are no 'natural' convergence patterns towards a dominant Spanish variety. The approaches taken exposed integral features of address behaviour not dealt with in previous studies. Informants, for instance, displayed highly variable attitudes regarding the importance of address. Speakers' levels of awareness with regard to address forms produced and received was also shown to vary considerably. Some informants adapted towards the address systems of speakers of varieties of Spanish other than their own, providing evidence of address accommodation. Generational status (first and second generation) of immigrants emerged as a factor of variation in address systems. Finally, a previously undocumented practice, 'pronominal switching', was also observed amongst several informants, a behaviour whereby speakers switch between different singular address pronouns when speaking to the same person.