

## **Conversational and Prosodic Patterns in Spanish Requests**

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This study analyzes the manifestations of *autonomy* and *affiliation* (cf. Bravo 2004) in the performance of requests among young Colombian women in comparable situations, presented in a symmetrical system (-Power), and with various degrees of social distance (+/-Distance). The data were examined quantitatively and qualitatively, and the role of linguistic and non-linguistic (i.e. prosodic) devices of mitigation was closely examined in relation to *politeness* and *face*. The results show that, in terms of frequency, Conventionally Indirect requests constitute the most common strategy in this variety, followed by Direct requests, and Non-conventionally indirect requests. Internal and external modification in requests is also found to be significant in all conversations (downgraders, expressions of solidarity, intensifiers). Also, specific prosodic patterns are found in certain types of segments within the interactions, which suggest a direct relation between prosody and politeness in the realization of requests. The results of the study indicate that young Bucaramanga female speakers tend to manifest cooperation and camaraderie when involved in -Distance situations, and respect and deference when involved in + Distance situations. In this sense, some components of *face* seem to reflect the socio-cultural background of this community in Bucaramanga, Colombia.

**Keywords:** Politeness; Face; Prosody; Requests; Colombian Spanish

### **1. Introduction**

Preliminary observations indicate that the study of requests in Colombian Spanish has been very limited (Delgado, 1995; Escamilla Morales, Morales Escorcia, Torres Roncallo, & Henry Vega, 2004). Furthermore, although prosody has been noted to play an important role in conversation, few studies have directly analyzed the (im)polite effects of prosody and its relation with the production of speech acts (Briz & Hidalgo, 2008).

The present study closely examines the production of requests in Bucaramanga Spanish, a Colombian dialect which has been little explored, through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of conversational patterns. The analysis derived from the study contains evidence that supports the claim that both linguistic (external and internal mitigation) and non-linguistic (prosody) strategies are used by speakers in order to convey certain components of *face*. Furthermore, the pitch patterns extracted from request head-acts provide further evidence to the claim that prosody is directly related to the manifestation of (im)politeness. Finally, the results of the study contribute to a more accurate understanding of the dialectal spectrum in Colombian Spanish, in terms of request production: In an (in)directness continuum, Bucaramanga and Pasto Spanish (both Andean varieties) share more similarities in the use of indirectness when compared to Barranquilla Spanish (a Caribbean variety).

The paper is organized as follows: the first section reviews previous literature related to the study of requests in Spanish, and it includes the research questions that motivated this study. The second section describes the methodology used for the data collection: the sample, the method of data collection, and the procedures for the analysis of the data. The third section outlines the research findings by providing a detailed account of the distribution of request head-acts (a quantitative analysis), and an exhaustive analysis of head-acts in each situation (a qualitative analysis). The fourth section includes a discussion of the results obtained in terms of socio-cultural considerations and socio-pragmatic variation, the limitations of the study, and pathways for future research. Finally, the fifth section briefly enumerates general conclusions.

## **2. Background**

### *2.1. Requests and politeness*

Speech acts have been widely studied in English and German (House & Kasper, 1981), Australian English and Polish (Wierzbicka, 2003), Canadian French, German, Australian English, Spanish and Hebrew (Blum Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), among other languages. Requests, in particular, have been analyzed across languages by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), in French by Warga (2005), in British English by Márquez Reiter (2000), in Polish by Wierzbicka (2003), in Persian by Salmani Nodoushan (2007, 2008) and Salmani Nodoushan and Allami (2011), among Chinese learners of English by Lee (2011), and so forth. Wierzbicka (2003) indicates that studies in speech acts have suffered from ethnocentrism, since the observations obtained in Anglo-Saxon communities are generalized to other communities and cultures.

Throughout her analysis the author suggests that, unlike English, *interrogative directives* are not commonly used in Polish to express requests and sound formal and elaborately polite, whereas flat imperatives constitute one of the *milder* ways to express them. Polish imperatives are often combined with various particles to minimize or maximize the weight of the imposition, which blurs earlier theoretical distinctions between directness and indirectness. Wierzbicka (2003) highlights the importance in relating language-specific norms of interaction with specific cultural values of the individual and the community.

## 2.2. Requests and politeness in Spanish

When looking specifically at Spanish, several scholars have drawn interesting conclusions regarding request production. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), for example, demonstrate in their analysis that Conventional Indirectness is the most frequently used strategy by Argentines, who also show to be the most direct group. According to García (1993), Peruvian female and male speakers prefer deference over camaraderie when making a request; they establish camaraderie when responding affirmatively to it, and deference when responding negatively. García (2002), however, observes a different tendency in Venezuelan speakers since they show a balance between deference and solidarity politeness when making a request and responding to it.

Márquez-Reiter's (2000) analysis shows that Uruguayan speakers are more direct in their requests when their relation to the interlocutor is less distant, and they are more indirect when their relation to the interlocutor is more distant. Placencia (1998) compares the realization of requests in service encounters in Madrid and Quito Spanish, and finds that more abrupt and direct formulas are employed by Spaniards, and that compensatory measures such as address terms and politeness formulas are more widely used by Ecuadorians when making a direct request. Félix-Brasdefer's (2005) analysis of Mexican requests indicates that conventional indirectness is more common in situations of +Power or +Distance, whereas directness is more common in situations of -Distance.

Most of the research on Spanish requests has consisted on describing the strategies that speakers of certain communities use to realize them, following the politeness model of Brown and Levinson (1987), and Blum Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification of requests.

Other authors (Boretti, 2003; Hernández Flórez, 1999; et al.) have followed the socio-cultural approach to politeness, as defined by Bravo (1999, 2004). This view closely relates language to society and culture since speakers acquire interpretative resources that originate from their social environments and their previous communicative experiences. In this sense,

speakers may partially share such experience with other people from the community (they share with the group), and may not partially share it with those same people (they have it as individuals). This new approach arises as an attempt to construct a characterization of social image (*face*) which relates communicative behaviors with socio-cultural contexts. Bravo (1999, 2004) proposes the notions of *autonomy* and *affiliation*, adapted from Fant (1989), as human needs that comprise aspects of *face*. For Bravo (1999), *autonomy* is related to the image that the individual has of him/herself, and the image that others have of the individual as someone different from the group; *Affiliation*, on the other hand, is related to the individual's and others' perception of him/herself as part of the group. Bravo (1999) claims that the positive and negative aspects of social image are not universal, as claimed by Brown and Levinson (1987), and should be defined socio-culturally. Thus, her socio-cultural view of politeness greatly contributes to the study of politeness since it detaches from previous claims that view it as a constant factor, whose strategies are applicable universally. In fact, as the author points out, the universal categories of *autonomy* and *affiliation* are not fixed, and they should be interpreted as empty categories that are filled according to socio-cultural premises<sup>1</sup>.

Given the need to study the expression of these components of *face*, and the lack of research on requests in other Spanish dialects (i.e. Colombian Spanish), the present study adopts Bravo's (1999, 2004) socio-cultural view of politeness in order to analyze the production of requests in the community of young female university students from Bucaramanga, Colombia.

### 2.2.1. *Studies of requests and politeness in Colombian Spanish*

In terms of Colombian Spanish, few studies have explored the role of politeness in requests. Delgado's (1995) dissertation on requests in Colombian and Peninsular Spanish, and American English, constitutes a first attempt to explore this area of pragmatics in this particular variety of Spanish. The author investigates the specific norms and strategies of expressing politeness in each of the three cultures, and the factors that influence their behavior toward politeness. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness, Delgado (1995) designs discourse completion tests (DCTs), and distributes them to 30 Colombian speakers from

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<sup>1</sup> Salmani Nodoushan (2012) also proposes an interesting theory of politeness and *face*, according to which there are not only face-threatening acts (FTAs), but also face-attacking acts (FAAs). While FTAs originate naturally, FAAs require active and conscious engagement. Thus, his proposal entails that in order to analyze politeness and *face* it is also necessary to understand the cultural values and practices shared by a particular speech community.

Pasto, in Southern Colombia; 30 Peninsular speakers from Madrid, Bilbao, and Valladolid; and 30 American speakers from Long Island, N.Y. The various situations employed varied according to  $\pm$  Power,  $\pm$  Distance, and  $\pm$  Ranking of imposition factors. Among her findings, Delgado (1995) indicates that Spaniards are the least formal group and show a greater degree of directness, in comparison to the Colombian and the American groups. Thus, Peninsular speakers employ more informal expressions when making requests, whereas Colombian speakers use more formal ones. Although Delgado (1995) acknowledges that *Politeness Theory* is successful in showing different distributions of  $\pm$  Power,  $\pm$  Distance, and  $\pm$  Ranking of imposition, she admits that this theory does not allow her to provide an adequate account of the complexity of identity issues that motivate the communicative behavior observed.

Escamilla et al. (2004) study verbal and non-verbal politeness in Northern Colombia from a semiolinguistic perspective. In their study, the authors attempt to describe the various expressions of politeness in verbal and non-verbal interactions produced by speakers from Barranquilla, Colombia. By means of data collected from real conversations, they study communicational and social components such as the presence of the interlocutors (physical presence or absence, proximity and non-proximity), their social identity (age, gender, social class, etc.), their psychological identity (humor, happiness, sadness, etc.), the relation of strength within them (physical strength, personality, intelligence, etc.), and the degree of knowledge among interlocutors. The authors conclude that conversational processes in the city of Barranquilla are based on a specific ritual, closely related to the community's idiosyncrasy, which is characterized by informality, and interventions that denoted open destination, positive affection, and strength. Throughout their analysis, they emphasize the lack of linguistic politeness markers in the speech of these coastal speakers (expressions of mitigation, diminutives, etc.), which does not affect the success of the communicative contract among them, although it may be seen rude by speakers of other dialects.

Finally, Ringer Uber (1984) implicitly discusses the role of politeness in the use of address forms in Bogotá Spanish. By analyzing the functions of *tú* 'you informal' and *usted* 'you formal' found in contemporary natural conversations among Bogotá speakers, the author claims that there is a continuum of [ $\pm$  solidarity], which characterizes the use of *usted* in this particular dialect.

So far it has been shown how several studies have attempted to describe polite behavior in Spanish speaking communities when making requests. Interestingly enough, most studies have only focused their analyses in linguistic manifestations of politeness when producing or responding to

requests. Although some studies have suggested the importance of prosody in the study of requests (Bravo and Briz, 2004; Briz and Hidalgo, 2008), few of them have closely examined specific prosodic aspects (intonation, speech intensity, etc.) and their relation to (im)politeness. It is our belief that prosody has a strong influence in the realization of requests, and that its effects have been undermined in the analysis of request strategies.

### *2.3. Prosody*

Prosody is here understood as a mechanism used to describe acoustic properties of speech that cannot be completely predicted from orthographic transcription, and whose components may include pitch (i.e., intonation), loudness, speed, and voice quality. Prosody has been widely studied in the fields of phonetics and phonology, but scarcely analyzed in pragmatics. Schegloff (1998), and Swerts and Hirschberg (1998), illustrate the need to analyze prosody in the study of conversation, and provide some suggestions to include this factor in *Conversation Analysis* research. Schegloff (1998), for example, claims that prosody should be studied in context, that is, within a tone unit or a talk-in-interaction segment. In his study of telephone conversations, Schegloff (1998) specifically examines pitch peaks and their relation to the end of turns, and initial turns. He finds that pitch peaks may initiate a turn or inform speakers that the next syntactic possible completion is the designed end of a turn.

Culpeper, Boufield and Wichmann's (2003) work on the effects of prosody in impoliteness is one of the first attempts to make a connection between prosody and pragmatics. By using television documentary recordings of disputes between traffic wardens and car owners, these authors analyze the manifestation of impoliteness in pitch and loudness patterns. According to them, in order to fully appreciate impoliteness, it is necessary to move beyond single strategies (lexically and grammatically defined), and examine the role of prosody when conveying impoliteness. Prosody was, in fact, found to affect the way an utterance is conveyed, by making it more impolite according to the situation. Pitch, in particular, operates paralinguistically to express speaker's emotions while certain local pitch changes tend to have grammatical and discourse functions. Thus, high pitch is associated to deference, and low pitch with assertiveness.

### *2.4. Research questions*

This study addresses specific questions regarding the production of requests in Colombian Spanish. First, what kinds of request strategies are used by young female Bucaramanga students when performing requests in specific contexts? Second, what components of *face* can be found in such request

process? Third, what is the role of prosody in the realization of requests, and what effects does it have on politeness?

### 3. Method

This section describes the participants, instruments, and procedures of the study.

#### 3.1. Participants

Ten female undergraduate students from Bucaramanga<sup>2</sup> participated in this study. At the time of the data collection, they were between the ages of 18 and 21. Seven of them were studying *International Business* at *USTA*, and the other three were enrolled in the *Language Teaching* program at *UIS*.

Based on Rincón's (2004) account of Bucaramanga's demography, it is possible to characterize our speakers as members of the *middle class continuum* (upper-middle, middle-middle, and lower-middle class), since they are all college students, who are probably supported economically by their parents. For the purposes of this study, we will assume that the participants belong to two *Communities of Practice* (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) or *University Discourse Communities* (Granato, 2002): seven are part of a private-university community (*USTA*), and three to a public-university community (*UIS*).

All ten undergraduate students interacted with the same volunteer: a thirty-three year-old female who was their English instructor during that semester.

#### 3.2. Instruments

The data were collected using open-ended role-plays, as they have shown to generate representative and ample data for the study of speech acts (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003). The situations employed were adapted from those used by Félix-Brasdefer (2005), so that certain vocabulary and expressions would suit the Colombian dialect. The six situations were comprised by four request

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<sup>2</sup> Bucaramanga is a mid-size Andean city with approximately one million inhabitants. Rincón (2004) describes the city as the most important urban center of northeastern Colombia, and its people as hard-working, courteous, but stern (Rincón, 2004, 4). The city has rapidly developed over the past decades and it currently attracts a massive student population from its surrounding areas, given the large amount of colleges and universities available. The data were collected at two universities: *Universidad Industrial de Santander (UIS)*, a public institution nationally and internationally recognized for its academic standards, and *Universidad Santo Tomás (USTA)*, a private college managed by Dominican priests.

situations, and two distracters (a compliment and an invitation). The average number of words for all four request situations is 150. In these four situations, the factor *Power* remains constant [-P], and the factor *Distance* varies from [+D] situations (a-b) to [-D] situations (c-d).

Table 1.

*Request Situations Used for Data Collection*

Request situation	Distance	Power
a. <i>Ride</i> : the participant asks a stranger for a ride to a gas station.	+D	-P
b. <i>Class notes</i> : the participant borrows class notes from her classmate.	+D	-P
c. <i>Bathroom</i> : the participant asks her roommate to wash the bathroom.	-D	-P
d. <i>Map</i> : the participant asks her friend to get directions.	-D	-P

The request situations outlined in Table 1 carefully describe the difficulty that the speaker encounters, and the possible solutions that their interlocutor may be able to provide for them. At the end, the question *¿Qué le dices?* 'What do you say to her?' concludes every situation, so that the participant knows that it is her time to start the simulation. The complete set of request situations can be found in Appendix A.

### 3. 3. Procedures

In order to create a comfortable environment, speakers interacted with someone they already knew (their English instructor), in their own classroom. Each participant interacted separately with the volunteer, and the researcher was present during all interactions. The situations, typed in index cards, were given to each participant, one at a time. A few minutes were provided to allow the student to read the situation, understand it, and make questions if needed. Once the student was ready for the interaction, the researcher retrieved the index card and started the voice recorder. After each situation, the researcher stopped the recording and handed a new index card (with a new situation) to the participant.

All conversations were carefully transcribed following a modified version of Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions (See Appendix B). In terms of strategies used in the production of requests, head act strategies were examined according to a modified version of the classification by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Márquez-Reiter (2000). Head act strategies were classified into (i) Direct requests, (ii) Conventionally Indirect requests, and (iii) Non-



conventionally Indirect requests. Direct requests comprise six strategies (Mood Derivable, Performative, Obligation Statement, Need Statement, Want Statement, Elliptical Direct), and Conventionally Indirect requests comprise four strategies (Suggestory Formulae, Query Preparatory Indicative, Query Preparatory Conditional/Imperfect, Query Preparatory Future/Subjunctive). Non-conventionally Indirect requests are only comprised by hints. All head act strategies and examples are included in Appendix C.

Finally, pitch (intonation) contours were only obtained for Direct head-acts. The fact that this kind of request strategy is the most direct and less mitigated one, poses an interesting context to find relations between prosody and (im)politeness. Pitch tracks were extracted using *Praat*, Version 4.13.14 (Boersma & Weenink, 2005), and the pitch range was set to 100-500 Hz, since this is the adequate range to display pitch contours of female voices.

#### 4. Results

##### *Distribution of request strategies*

The present study limits its results to the analysis of head acts in order to provide a deep and concrete account of request strategies in terms of politeness tendencies and prosodic patterns. As illustrated in Table 2 below, from the 94 cases of head-act strategies obtained, 49% ( $N= 46$ ) are Direct requests, 44% ( $N= 41$ ) are Conventionally Indirect requests, and 7% ( $N= 7$ ) are Non-Conventionally Indirect requests.

Table 2.

##### *Distribution of Head-Act Strategies in the Corpus*

Type of head-act strategy	Tokens	Percentages
Direct (D)	46	49
Conventionally Indirect (CI)	41	44
Non-Conventionally Indirect (NCI)	7	7
Totals	94	100

These general results suggest an unexpected tendency in this dialect, given that Direct requests have been found to be less frequent than Conventionally Indirect requests in other Spanish dialects (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; García, 1993; Márquez-Reiter, 2000). However, a detailed analysis of each head-act strategy in each of the four situations (ride, class notes, bathroom, and map) indicates the misleading nature of the account provided above. As Table 3 illustrates below, only Direct and Conventionally Indirect strategies were employed in all four situations, whereas Non-Conventionally Indirect strategies were used in only two of them (bathroom and ride).

As shown, Direct strategies occur more frequently in -Distance situations (bathroom and map), whereas Conventionally Indirect and Non-Conventionally Indirect strategies are employed more often in +Distance situations (notes and ride). Although this is an expected result, considering that -Distance situations have triggered the use of Direct strategies in other studies (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2005), it is interesting to find that most of the Direct strategies are used in the ride situation (the least distant situation), and that the type and frequency of these strategies change depending on the request situation.

*Table 3.*  
*Distribution of Head-Act Strategies per Situation*

Head-act strategy	+distance		← SITUATION →		-distance			
	Ride		Notes		Bathroom		Map	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
D	4	17	5	28	11	58	26	79
CI	15	62	13	72	6	32	7	21
NCI	5	21	0	0	2	10	0	0
TOTALS	24	100	18	100	19	100	33	100

Direct strategies, as explained in the previous section, were classified into MD (Mood Derivable), P (Performative), OS (Obligation Statement), NS (Need Statement), WS (Want Statement), and ED (Elliptical Direct)<sup>3</sup>. A careful analysis of Direct strategies employed by speakers demonstrates that MD is the most frequent strategy ( $N= 28/46$ ; 61%), followed by ED ( $N= 8/46$ ; 17%), NS ( $N= 4/46$ ; 9%), P ( $N= 3/46$ ; 6%), WS ( $N= 2/46$ ; 4%), and OS ( $N= 1/46$ ; 3%). In fact, MD strategies were mostly used in the map situation ( $N= 23/26$ , 88%), whereas both NS ( $N= 3/11$ ; 27%) and ED ( $N= 3/11$ ; 27%) were mostly used in the bathroom situation.

In the next section, a qualitative analysis of excerpts from each situation show that the overall frequency of Direct requests ( $N= 46/94$ ; 49%) in relation to Conventionally Indirect requests ( $N= 41/94$ ; 44%), is apparent and that it is mostly driven by the nature of the situation where it mostly occurs (the ride situation).

#### *4.1. Configuration of request strategies*

When looking at the data qualitatively, the distribution of head-act strategies appears to be consistent with the type of situation in which the request was produced. Although -Distance situations (ride and bathroom) require the

<sup>3</sup> Examples of each type of requests are provided in Appendix C.

participant to see her interlocutor as her close friend, the behavior encoded in the speech act varies from one situation to the other. However, +Distance situations (notes and ride) do not show such extreme contrast. A detail look at each situation shows that this heterogeneity corresponds to the nature of the -Distance situations.

#### 4.2. +Distance situations (ride, notes)

Given that the ride situation provides the most distant setting, indirect strategies are more frequent (CI:  $N= 15/41$ ; 37%; NCI:  $N= 5/7$ ; 71%), whereas direct strategies are less frequent (D:  $N= 4/46$ ; 9%). Examples of CI, NCI, and D strategies are shown in (1), (2), and (3) respectively:

- (1) AMP: *lo que pasa es que me quedé sin gasolina↓ y yo hm- necesito llegar al trabajo urgente, urgente↓, no puedo llegar tarde↓...((sigh)) y llevo media hora esperando un taxi, y nada †, **será que**↓...**sería mucha molestia pedirle que me lleve en su carro un momentico a la estación de gasolina?**↓*

Trans. What happens is that I ran out of gas and I need to get to work urgently, urgently, I can't arrive late ... and I've been here for half an hour waiting for a taxi, and nothing, so ... would it be too much of a trouble to ask you to take me in your car just a little bit to the gas station?

- (2) CFP: *uy señora, qué pena, discúlpeme, lo que pasa es que... mi carro se quedó sin gasolina y **necesito ir allí a tres kilómetros a- a...a conseguir gasolina, porfa** ((porfa = por favor)), **es que tengo que...ir a trabajar...y no...no sé quién más pedirle ayuda por aquí**↓*

Trans. Oh ma'am, I'm sorry, what happens is that ... my car ran out of gas and I need to go there three kilometers away to ... to find gas, please, it's that I need to go to...work and I don't ... know who else to ask for help around here.

- (3) AYP: *lo que pasa es que↓...me acabo de quedar sin gasolina↓...y para te-para más completar, se me que- e:- no tengo celular↓, y la agenda de los...teléfonos se me quedó y no puedo llamar a ningún familiar y- y amigos cercanos↓, para que me venga a auxiliar↓, entonces yo- **yo quería**↓...**si no fuera**↓- **si no sería mucha molestia**↓ **e:- que usted me- me acercara a la...gasolinería más cercana de acá para... traer la gasolina**↓*

Trans. What happens is that ... I just ran out of gas...and on top of everything I don't have my cell phone, and I left my ... address

book and I can't call any relatives or close friends to help me, so I wanted ... if it weren't too much of a trouble that you take me to the ... nearest gas station around here to bring gas.

Furthermore, as illustrated in the examples, the request head-act is accompanied by external mitigation devices (alerters, reasons, and intensifiers), and an ample repertoire of internal mitigation techniques (politeness markers, negation, diminutives, and intensifiers) that allows the speaker to minimize the strength of the imposition. In (1), for example, the Query Preparatory Fut/Subj request highlighted in bold is preceded by reasons (a need to get to work quickly and the impossibility to find transportation). The head-act itself is comprised by an initial modal expression (very common in this particular dialect), which is first expressed in future form (*será que*), and then modified by its conditional form (*sería [...]* *que*).

The intensifier (*mucha*) in the polite expression (*sería **mucha** molestia*), and the diminutive in *momento* (*momentico*) are also internal modification devices. In (2), the NCI head-act is preceded by alerters (*uy señora, qué pena, discúlpeme*), and reasons (the lacking of gas and the need to find some at the gas station). The head-act itself contains a shortened form of the politeness marker *por favor* (*por fa*). In (3), although the head act is direct (Want Statement), it is preceded by an extensive list of reasons (the lacking of gas, the impossibility of communication and help) which are desperately intensified by expressions such as *para **más** completar*, and ***ningún** familiar*. The head-act is mitigated by the polite expression *si no fuera- si no sería mucha molestia*, which is actually repaired by the speaker in an attempt to be less impositive (*fuera* changes to *sería*).

The notes situation also follows the expected pattern since it still refers to a situation of distant relation between the interlocutors (classmates who are not close friends), and it triggers the use of indirect strategies (CI:  $N= 13/41$ ; 32%) more frequently than direct strategies ( $N= 5/46$ ; 11%). However, the fact that no NCI strategies are used in this particular situation suggests that the notes and the ride situations do not demand the same type of interaction. Example (4) below illustrates CI strategies, and example (5) shows D strategies:

- (4) CFP: *oye nena, qué pena, discúlpame, lo que pasa es que...yo no pude asistir las últimas semanas a clase y necesito por favor los apuntes...que hicieron en la clase ((soft laugh))...**será que eres tan ama:ble y me los puedes prestar?***

Trans. hey honey, I'm sorry, what happens is that ... I couldn't come to class these past weeks and I need the notes that you took in class

- please...so would you be so kind to lend them to me?
- (5) AYP: *hmm ya*↓...*pues si quiere **préstemelos** y los- y los apuntes que usted tiene también se puede...*↓ ((very soft speech))
- Trans. ok ... well if you want, lend them to me and the notes that you have can also ....

In (4) external mitigation is again expressed by alerters (*oye nena, qué pena, discúlpame*), reasons (the impossibility of going to class and the need for the notes), and gratitude markers (*por favor*). Moreover, the Query Preparatory Fut/Subj request is composed of the modal expression *será que*, and the intensifier *tan* in *será que eres **tan** amable*. Although in (5) there are no immediate external mitigation devices, the hesitation expressed in *hmm* and *ya* shows the lowering of the imposition. This is also noticeable in the internal expression *pues si quiere* which precedes the MD strategy (***pues si quiere préstemelos***).

At this point, it is important to indicate that examples (1)-(3) contain the *formal* address form *usted* ('you'), which is expected given that the conversations occur between strangers. However, example (4) contains the *informal* address form *tú* ('you') and (5) contains the *formal* address form *usted*, which is an unexpected inconsistency given that both conversations are based on the same situation. It will be further shown in the next sections that the use of *formal* and *informal* address forms does not correlate with the ±Distant characteristic of the speakers' relations, and that its use is not consistent throughout interactions or within turns.

#### 4.3. -Distance situations (bathroom, map)

In the bathroom situation speakers hold a close relationship, which is evidenced by the frequency of D strategies ( $N= 11/46$ ; 24%), and CI strategies ( $N= 6/41$ ; 15%). Although this situation implies a close relation between interlocutors, it is still possible to find NCI strategies ( $N= 2/7$ ; 29%). Examples of D, CI, and NCI strategies are shown in (6), (7), and (8) below:

- (6) CFP: = ((laughs)) *necesito que **por favor me ayudes con la limpieza este sábado**... porque no- no puedo, es imposible tengo que trabajar, me contrataron↑...y: y: empiezo este sábado, es imposible, y el domingo llegan mis padres, por favor **ayúdame** porque quiero que ellos vean la casa bien↑*
- Trans. I need you to please help me with the cleaning this Saturday...because I can't, it's impossible and I have to work, they hired me...and I start this Saturday, it's impossible and on Sunday my parents arrive, please help me because I want them to see a clean house.

- (7) MGV: *es que resulta que mis papás vienen el domingo:↓, pues llegan acá al apartamento↓, y la verdad es que yo no tengo tiempo para: asearlo↓, entonces **será que tú no: me puedes ayudar en eso?**↑*  
 Trans. what happens is that my parents come this Sunday, well they arrive here to the apartment, and the truth is that I don't have time to clean it, so can you help me with that?
- (8) APA: *= pero lo que pasa es que el sábado yo tengo que irme desde la mañana hasta la noche a estudiar donde una amiga↑ y el domingo en la mañana no puedo porque también me voy a estudiar↓ y voy bien- y este domingo llegan mis papás↓...y entonces me **gustaría que vieran todo ordenado...**y es que **desafortunadamente no puedo lavar el baño**↓*  
 Trans. but what happens is that on Saturday I have to go all day long to a friend's house and on Sunday morning I can't because I'm also going to study and this Sunday my parents come over...so I would like them to see everything clean...and unfortunately I can't wash the bathroom.

In (6) both head-acts (NS: *necesito que por favor me ayudes con la limpieza este sábado*; MD: *por favor, ayúdame*) are externally modified by reasons (starting a new job and having parents coming to visit). Internally, both the NS and the MD are mitigated by the politeness marker *por favor*. In (7) the Query Preparatory Fut/Subj request is externally modified by reasons (the visiting parents and the lack of time), and the intensifier expression *la verdad* in **la verdad** *es que yo no tengo tiempo*. Internally, the request is mitigated by the modal expression *será que*, and *no* functioning as a mitigator. Finally, in (8), the NCI head-act is externally mitigated by reasons (absence, lack of time, visiting parents), and internally by conditional forms (*me gustaría*) and intensifiers (*desafortunadamente*).

In the above examples ((1)-(8)), speakers show a tendency to avoid imposition. Although Direct strategies are used in examples (3), (5), and (6), speakers employ various kinds of external and internal mitigation strategies to minimize the power of the imposition. At the same time, they appear courteous and desperate (3), they submit themselves to their interlocutor's will (5), or they seem apologetic when pleading for help (6).

However, in the map situation, participants feel entitled to impose more. The drastic increase of D strategies ( $N= 26/46$ ; 57%), the low use of CI strategies ( $N= 7/41$ ; 17%), and the complete absence of NCI strategies suggest that this situation demands a higher degree of imposition given the immediacy of the problem (being stuck in traffic and not knowing where to go), and the

disappointment experienced by the participant (she has been placed in a difficult position because her friend forgot to bring the map). D and CI strategies in the map situation are shown in (9) and (10), respectively:

(9) CFP: *((laughs)) no, te tocó a tí, **te tocó preguntarle a esa persona que va pasando**, aproveche que el semáforo está en rojo y...y **pregúntele** porque para qué olvidaste el mapa...yo confiaba en que usted lo tenía↓*

Trans. no, it's your turn, you have to ask that person who is passing by, do it now that the traffic light is red and...ask him because why did you forget the map...I trusted that you had it

(10) CSS: *OLU me puede↓- me puedes hacer un favor?↑ **por qué no le preguntas al...señor que está ahí↑ parado↓** si nos puede al-hacer el favor de poder llegar a la galería?↓ **podrías?**↑*

Trans. OLU could you do me a favor? Why don't you ask the...man standing there if he could do us the favor to get us to the gallery? Could you?

In (9) the OS (*te tocó preguntarle*) and the MD (*pregúntele*) are externally modified only by a series of reasons. When comparing the type of reasons given here to those given in previous examples of D strategies ((3), (5), (6)), it is clear that they concern different types of interaction. In (3), (5), and (6), the reasons justify the use of D strategies on the basis of accidental situations (running out of gas), or situations which the participant could have avoided (missing class and not having the notes; failing to keep her compromise to clean the bathroom). In (9), however, the fact that the participant relied on her friend to arrive promptly to the art gallery, justifies her disappointment (*yo confiaba en que usted lo tenía*), and her blaming behavior (*para qué olvidaste el mapa*). In fact, the use of OS strategies and the absence of internal mitigators reinforce the idea that the speaker is upset with her interlocutor and *expects* her to solve the problem.

Although (10) is a CI request, the use of Suggestory Formulae (*por qué no le preguntas [...]*), and the absence of internal modification also indicates the increase of the imposition. In fact, the use of a shorter form of the Query Preparatory Cond/Imper request (*podrías?*) seems to reinforce and punctually end the demand. (10), unlike (9), is externally modified by alerters (*OLU*), and preparators (*me puedes hacer un favor?*).

In terms of address forms, it is important to indicate that example (9) is representative of the frequent interchangeable use of *formal* and *informal* address forms. The particularity of excerpts like (9), here repeated as (11), is

that the *tú* forms (highlighted in bold), and the *usted* forms (shaded) occur both in the same turn.

- (11) CFP: ((laughs)) *no, **te tocó a tí, te tocó** preguntarle a esa persona que va pasando, **aproveche** que el semáforo está en rojo y...y **pregúntele** porque para qué **olvidaste** el mapa...yo **confiaba** en que **usté lo tenía***↓

When examining interactions across turns, we see that the disappointment is expressed by most participants (7 out of 10) throughout the conversation, as exemplified in fragment (12) below, where TAR is the participant and OLU is the volunteer:

- (12) 1 TAR: *uy **cómo pudiste dejar el mapa?***↑  
 2 OLU: *ay no, pero yo lo dejé ahí↓, se me quedó en la mesa↓, yo ya venía para acá↑ y no*  
 3 *sé [se me quedó*  
 4 TAR: *ay] no↓...**eso no [se vale** y ahora?...↑*  
 5 OLU: *pero] yo más o menos lo miré::↓ y ahí más o menos las calles ahí: ↓*  
 6 TAR: *= **pero es que más o menos no sirve**, necesitamos [es...*  
 7 OLU: *= ay] pero imposible que no seamos capaces de guiarnos ahí↓...por los avisos y*  
 8 *por los...*  
 9 TAR: *ay mira↑, ahí hay una persona, **necesito que por favor le pregúntes**↓, como*  
 10 *para:...ahí más o menos↓*  
 11 OLU: *= ay pero- ay sí pero usté que es menos tímida↑*  
 12 TAR: *= no:: ↓ pero es que usté fue la que dejó el mapa↓, no yo↓*  
 13 OLU: *ay pero:↑...pues sí fue mi culpa↓, pero usté sabe que yo soy muy penosa↓, y*  
 14 *más para hablar con extraños↑*  
 15 TAR: *ay no↓, no me parece↓, además...él va por el lado tuyo↓, no por el mío↓*

- Trans. 1 TAR: *oh, how could you leave the map behind?*  
 2 OLU: *oh no, but I left it there, I left it on the table, I was on my way here and I don't*  
 3 *know [I left it*  
 4 TAR: *oh] no...that's not [fair, and now?...*  
 5 OLU: *but] I kind of saw it and the streets are kind of*  
 6 TAR: *= yes, but 'kind of' doesn't help us, what we need [is...*  
 7 OLU: *= oh] but I can't believe that we won't be able to guide*



- ourselves around...by  
 8 looking at signs and...  
 9 TAR: hey look, there's someone I need you to please ask him↓,  
 how we can  
 10 to...kind of  
 11 OLU: = but- yes, but you do it because you're less shy  
 12 TAR: = no but you were the one who left the map, not me  
 13 OLU: but...yes, I know it was my fault, but you know that I'm a  
 very shy person,  
 14 even more if I have to talk to strangers  
 15 TAR: no, no, I don't think so and also...he's walking by your side,  
 not mine.

The participant's disappointment is clearly expressed in line 1 (*cómo pudiste dejar el mapa*), line 4 (*eso no se vale* 'that's not fair')<sup>4</sup>, and line 6 (*pero es que más o menos no sirve*). Given OLU's invalid excuses and TAR's disappointment, TAR proceeds to demand OLU to ask for directions, that is, TAR feels licensed to perform a direct request. The request in line 9 (*necesito que por favor le preguntes*), as expected from the previous turns, is direct (NS). Although it is mitigated by *por favor*, by the context of the interaction, and by the prosodic features of the head act (as it will be explained in the next section), the request is still stern. However, when OLU refuses in line 11, TAR expresses her disappointment with a contradiction in line 12 (*no*), and a subsequent reason to blame OLU (*pero es que usted fue la que dejó el mapa*). After OLU's second refusal in lines 13-14, TAR again expresses a contradiction in line 15 (*ay no, no me parece*), and a new reason (*él va por el lado tuyo, no por el mío*).

Furthermore, the fact that the direct request seems justified in this type of situation is indicated by the low use of external and internal mitigation. Finally, similar to the participant in example (9), TAR also uses both *tú* and *usted* address forms to refer to her close friend OLU. Although she does not employ them both in the same turn, she employs *usted* only when she strongly contradicts OLU in line 11 (*no, pero es que usted fue la que dejó el mapa, no yo*).

As shown in this subsection, although both the map and the bathroom situations are [-D], and Direct requests are the most frequent head-act strategies used, there are some qualitative differences between the two: participants conveyed more imposition in the map situation because they feel justified to do so in the given context.

<sup>4</sup> In Colombian Spanish this expression means that something is not right or is not a valid argument. In this case, TAR considers an invalid excuse the fact that O left the map on the table and in the midst of her hurry she left it.

It is also important to indicate that Direct strategies do not occur isolated from other strategies. In the map situation, in particular, most speakers employ other request strategies (direct and indirect), and internal and external modification to lower or raise the degree of the imposition. Example (13), which is a longer version of (10), illustrates the complexity of the conversation pattern:

- (13) 1 CSS: *OLU me puede↓- me puedes hacer un favor?↑ **por qué no le preguntas al...señor***  
 2 ***que está ahí↑ parado↓** si nos puede al- hacer el favor de poder llegar a la*  
 3 *galería?↓ **podrías?↑** [...]*  
 4 OLU: *no, pero a mí me da pena preguntarle a ese señor... ↓ [y a mí me da pena hablar*  
 5 *con desconocidos↓*  
 6 CSS: *ay OLU:: ((unaudible segment))] **OLU, por fa↓**, mira que es que si me ven*  
 7 *aquí↓...distráida los- los señores del tránsito, me pueden por algo↓...alguna*  
 8 *falla↓, **por qué no les preguntas?** ↓, por fa↓*  
 9 OLU: *no, pero igual yo no me voy a bajar del carro↓, acerca el carro lo más que*  
 10 *puedas↓*  
 11 CSS: *sí pero **pregúntale**↓, **pregúntale** por fa↓, es que estoy más lejos a ellos...**por qué***  
 12 ***no le preguntas?** ↓, por fa↓*

- Trans. 1 CSS: OLU, could you do me a favor? Why don't you ask that man  
 2 who's standing there, to see if he can help us get to the  
 3 gallery? Could you? [...]  
 4 OLU: no, but I feel bad to ask that man... [and I'm too shy when I  
 5 talk  
 6 to strangers  
 6 CSS: Come on, OLU] OLU, please, look, if they see me  
 7 here ... all distracted, the transit police, they can give me ...  
 8 some  
 8 ticket, why don't you ask him?, please  
 9 OLU: no, but I'm going to get off the car, bring the car as close as  
 10 you can  
 11 CSS: yes, but ask him, ask him please, I'm further away from  
 12 them...why  
 12 don't you ask him? please.

CSS starts the conversation by signaling OLU that she needs a favor (*OLU me puedes hacer un favor?*) in line 1. The subsequent requests in lines 2-3 are Suggestory Formulae (*por qué no le preguntas al señor*), and Query Preparatory Cond/Imperf (*podrías*). After receiving a refusal in lines 4-5, the speaker addresses her interlocutor repeatedly (*ay OLU:: [...] OLU...*), and decides to insist by means of a more direct strategy: ED (*OLU, por fa ↓*). A more indirect strategy reinforces CSS' previous requests and ends the turn in lines 7-8 (*por qué no le preguntas*). Finally, in lines 11-12 CSS reinforces the imposition by employing MD strategies (*pregúntale, pregúntale por fa*), reasons (*es que estoy más lejos a ellos*), and a less direct request (*por qué no le preguntas?*).

So far the distribution and the configuration of requests have been discussed in terms of quantitative and qualitative analyses. In conclusion, it is observed that the quantitative distribution of request types may be determined by the type of situation in which speakers are immersed. In particular, the fact that Direct strategies are the most frequent in the corpus is explained by the nature of the situation in which they mostly occur (map), and by the correlation between the different types of direct strategies and the kinds of situations where they are employed. Although linguistic devices such as internal and external mitigation strategies help speakers mitigate or intensify the strength of the imposition, it will be shown in the next section that non-linguistic devices (i.e., intonation) also help them to increase or decrease this force.

#### 4.4. Prosodic analysis of requests

As mentioned in the second section, the prosodic analysis was only performed on direct requests. Specifically, the analysis only concerns direct requests taken from the map situation (the least distant situation), given that this is the setting where most of the direct strategies were employed ( $N=26/46$ ; 57%). In fact, direct requests in the map situation are comprised by MD strategies ( $N=23/26$ ; 88%), OS strategies ( $N=1/26$ ; 4%), NS strategies ( $N=1/26$ ; 4%), and ED strategies ( $1/26$ ; 4%).

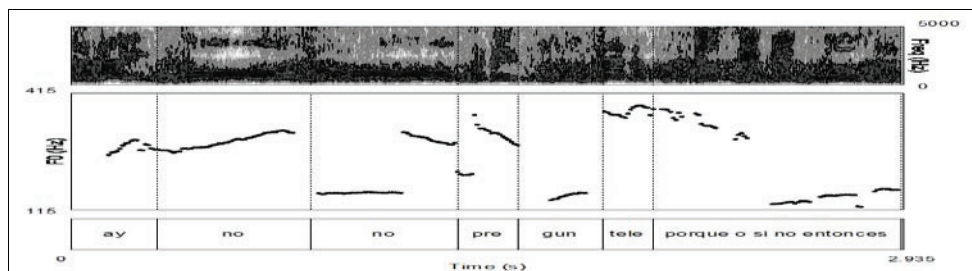


Figure 1. Pitch track of an MD request with Lowering/Rising pitch.

All these strategies showed specific prosodic tendencies which we describe in terms of four pitch patterns. The first pattern, which we call Lowering/Rising pitch pattern, was the most commonly found among MD strategies ( $N=15/23$ ; 65%), and OS strategies ( $N=1/1$ ; 100%). In this pattern, the head-act starts with a high pitch (around 350Hz), it lowers to almost 100Hz, and it finally rises to almost 400Hz. This type of pitch contour seems to consistently show the speaker's tentativeness to produce the request, her desire to decrease the degree of the imposition, and to be respectful. In Figure 1 above, for example, although the MD head-act *pregúntele* ('ask him') is very direct, it is prosodically modified to convey less imposition and the speaker's tentative attitude:

The second pattern, here called Rising pitch pattern, was the second most commonly found in MD strategies ( $N=4/23$ ; 17%), and the only one used in NS strategies ( $N=1/1$ ; 100%). In this pattern, the head-act starts with a low pitch (around 200Hz), and it increasingly rises to around 300Hz with upstep tone  $\downarrow L+H^*$ <sup>5</sup>. In this type of pitch contour the speaker stresses her imposition towards her interlocutor, and does not make an attempt to soften it. As shown in Figure 2 below, the head-act (*pregúntale* 'ask him') starts with a low pitch (200Hz), which progressively rises to 300Hz. The clitic *le* ('him') is produced with a lowering pitch (from 300Hz to 270Hz), since it is prosodically tied to the closing segment (*a alguien* 'someone').

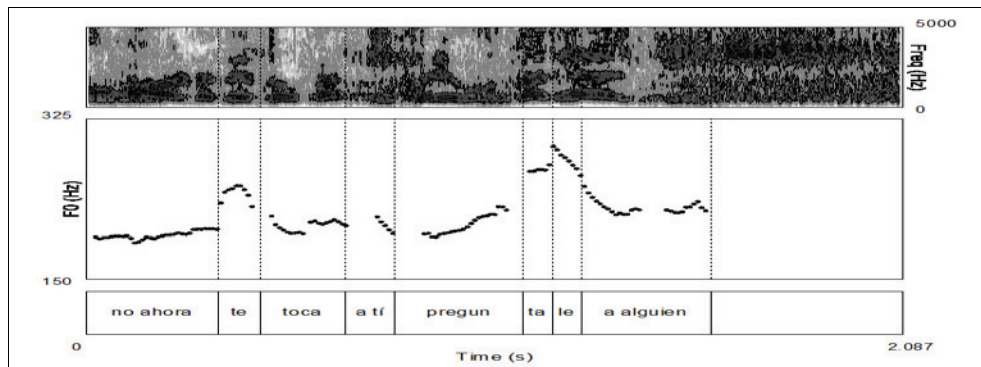


Figure 2. Pitch track of an MD request with Rising pitch.

The third pattern, Lowering pitch pattern, was only found in MD strategies ( $N=3/23$ ; 13%). In this pattern, the head-act generally starts with a relatively high pitch (380Hz) and it progressively drops to a low pitch (100Hz), with a falling tone  $H+L^*L\%$ . In this type of pitch contour, the request seems to end with a prosodic closure. Thus, instead of showing tentativeness, the speaker clearly manifests her imposition by signaling that her decision is final and

<sup>5</sup> The tone transcription here employed is taken from Beckman et al. (2002).

that she does not expect any contradictions to her demand. This is shown in Figure 3 below, where the head-act (*preguntas* 'you ask') finishes the speaker's intervention, and it is preceded by a segment that introduces a definite and closing statement (*lo siento pero* 'I'm sorry but'):

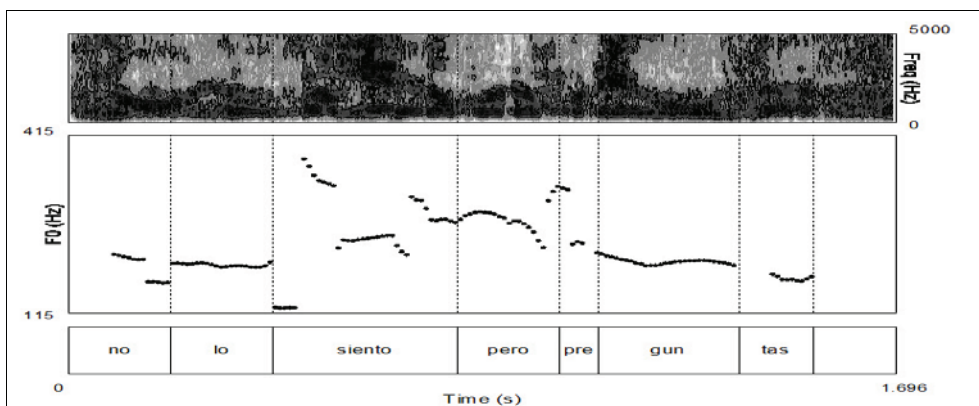


Figure 3. Pitch track of an MD request with Lowering pitch.

Finally, the fourth pattern, here called Sustained pitch pattern, was the least frequent one in MD strategies ( $N= 1/23$ ; 5%). In this pattern, the head-act does not show major prosodic changes. That is, it usually starts and ends at a mid-pitch level (250Hz). In this type of contour the speaker conveys neither imposition nor tentativeness, and the segment is produced as a neutral statement, with no particular prosodic characteristics. As shown in Figure 4 below, the head-act *pregúntele* ('ask him') is prosodically embedded in the entire segment *bueno pregúntele entonces desde* ('ok, ask him from'), with an average pitch level of approximately 250Hz. Only the last part of this segment *la ventana* ('the window') shows a pitch change that lowers from 250Hz to 200Hz, as it is used to close the intervention:

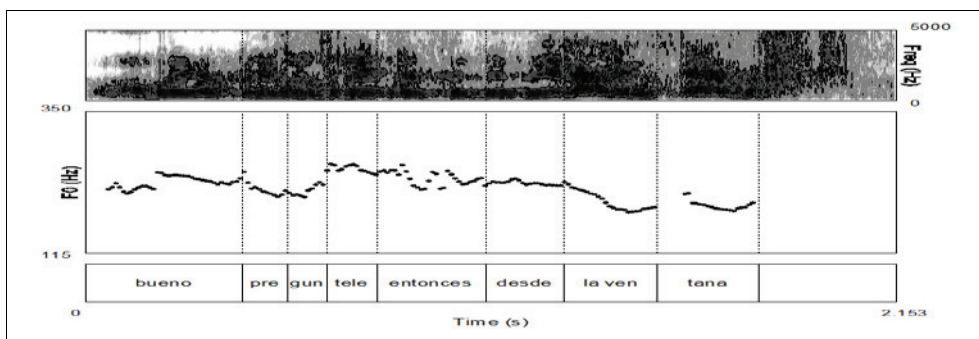


Figure 4. Pitch track of an MD request with Sustained pitch.

To summarize, the results from both linguistic and non-linguistic analyses show that speakers from this particular variety employ direct and indirect strategies in specific situations, under specific conversational circumstances. Moreover, Direct strategies are much more complex than expected. Although they appear to be the most frequent request strategy, their distribution shows that they are more commonly employed in less distant situations. Also, it is observed that Direct strategies are reinforced by internal and external mitigation strategies, the use of other types of requests (CI and NCI), and specific prosodic patterns.

In particular, the prosodic analysis of direct strategies in the map situation suggests that direct requests are produced with different prosodic patterns, although they may be classified under the same types of categories (MD, NS, OS, etc.). Furthermore, it is clear from this analysis that the prosodic features of a head-act are not only determined by the prosodic context in which they are embedded. For example, although the head-acts in Graphs 1, 2, and 3 are preceded by low-pitch segments (*ay no, no* in Graph 1, *no ahora te toca a tí* 'no, now it's your turn' in Graph 2, and *no lo siento pero* 'no, I'm sorry but' in Graph 3), they present very different prosodic patterns: Lowering-Rising pitch contour in Graph 1, Rising pitch contour in Graph 2, and Lowering pitch contour in Graph 3. As it will be discussed in the next section, both linguistic and non-linguistic features of a head-act may provide evidence to characterize the needs for *autonomy* and *affiliation* shown by young female Bucaramanga speakers.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Socio-cultural considerations

Quantitative and qualitative evidence examined in the previous section shows a clear correlation between  $\pm$ Distance and (in)directness in Bucaramanga Spanish. This is similar to what was found in Uruguayan Spanish by Márquez-Reiter (2000) and in Mexican Spanish by Félix-Brasdefer (2005). It is interesting, however, that speakers of this dialect choose not only certain types of request strategies depending on the situation of the interaction (e.g. MD in the map situation), but also specific linguistic (external and internal mitigation) and non-linguistic (intonation) devices to increase or decrease the degree of their imposition. This gives us reason to believe that young Bucaramanga female speakers are aware of the social implications of their linguistic acts, and that they chose certain strategies (linguistic and non-linguistic) to perform a request.

Following Wierzbicka's (2003) claims that the distinction between direct and indirect request strategies is not completely clear, and that language-specific

norms of interaction should be related to specific cultural values of the individual and the community, our results and analysis also seem to indicate the lack of exclusive correlation between directness and politeness. As shown in the results section, for example, neither CI strategies are exclusive types of requests for +Direct situations, nor are D strategies exclusive types of requests for -Direct situations. For example, in the ride situation (the most distant situation), it is possible to find interactions where both direct and indirect requests are used (e.g. excerpts (1)-(3)).

Furthermore, there seem to be certain norms of interaction that encode specific socio-cultural values of the individual and the community. That is, it is possible to extrapolate from our results that the speech of young female speakers from Bucaramanga reflects certain components of *face*, in terms of their needs for *affiliation* and *autonomy* (Bravo, 1999, 2004).

In +Distance situations, for example, speakers clearly recognize their interlocutor as someone different who needs to be respected. In the *ride* situation, for example, participants show a higher degree of *respect* toward the volunteer by means of various external strategies (Alerters: *uy señora, qué pena, discúlpeme* 'oh ma'am, I'm sorry'; Reasons: ... *mi carro se quedó sin gasolina* 'my car ran out of gas'), and internal strategies (Politeness Markers: *si no sería mucha molestia* 'if it weren't too much of a trouble'; Diminutives: *un momentico* 'in a little bit'). Other expressions denote the speaker's awareness of the other's need for *autonomy* such as: *buenas noches señora* ('good evening ma'am), *le agradecería muchísimo* ('I would greatly appreciate it'), or *que Dios se lo pague* ('may God reward you').

In the notes situation, participants also show their *respect* toward their interlocutor and recognize that even though they need her help, they do not have a close relationship with her. In some cases this *deference* is shown by certain external mitigation expressions, such as *¿será que eres tan amable y me los puedes prestar?* ('Would you be so kind to lend them to me?'), or *qué pena contigo* ('I feel so bad'). Also, the abundant use of external and internal mitigation devices indicate that the speaker is aware of the other's need for *autonomy*.

Although participants recognize the distance between them and the volunteer in +Distance situations, they also want to be understood and they express their desire to be helped. This need for *affiliation* (appealing to the interlocutor's solidarity) can be shown by the use of expressions such as *ay señora* ('oh ma'am'), *no me deje aquí* ('don't leave me here'), or *eso puede costar mi trabajo* ('that could cost me my job').

This need for *affiliation* and *autonomy* is also recoverable from their speech in -Distance situations since the camaraderie bonds between interlocutors and

the expressions of solidarity from the participants are constantly constructed throughout the interaction. In the bathroom situation, participants mainly show a desire to be helped and understood by the volunteer (they express their need for solidarity), although they also acknowledge that they are imposing on her. In this sense they acknowledge their interlocutor's need for *autonomy*, which is shown in expressions such as *yo sé que me corresponde hacerle el aseo al baño(...)* pero me es imposible hacerlo ('I know that it is my turn to clean the bathroom[...] but it's impossible for me to do it').

Given this imposition, participants try to reinforce their camaraderie bonds with the volunteer to minimize the force of their requests. They attempt to get closer to their interlocutor so that they can be understood and helped. This need for *affiliation* is indicated by colloquial expressions such as *porfis* (*por favor* 'please'), repeated expressions of insistence *ay dí que sí, dí que sí* ('oh say yes, say yes'), and overjustification (justification repeated along the turns).

In the map situation, participants also reinforce their camaraderie bonds and their need for solidarity throughout the entire interaction. This need for *affiliation* is again shown by a great occurrence of colloquial expressions such as *porfis* (*por favor* 'please'), *eso no se vale* ('that's not fair'), *mírele la pinta (la apariencia) que tiene* ('look at the appearance he has'), less employment of external and internal mitigation strategies, and more use of direct request strategies. Participants also indicate their need to be recognized as someone different from the interlocutor. This need for *autonomy* is commonly seen in this situation by expressions of disappointment and blame towards the interlocutor: *pregunte usted porque usted fue la que se le quedó el mapa yo me confié* ('you ask because it was you who left the map and I trusted you'), or *pero es que usted fue la que dejó el mapa, no yo* ('but it was you who left the map, not me').

After examining all conversations, it is also possible to find components of *face* in the use of *tú* (informal 'you') and *usted* (formal 'you'). As shown in the previous section, some speakers have a tendency to employ both address forms across the interaction, and within turns. These observations seem to further support Ringer Uber's (1984) claims, according to which *usted* in Colombian Spanish not always signals deference and distance between interlocutors. In fact, *usted* may express +Solidarity (among close friends and family) or -Solidarity (among strangers and acquaintances). As illustrated in this study, the gradient uses of ±Solidarity *usted* are also present in the speech of Bucaramanga young female speakers, since they use this form of address when referring to close friends (bathroom and map situations), when talking to an acquaintance, or to stranger (notes and ride situations).

Interestingly enough, speakers from the private-university community of practice seem to make the greatest effort to employ *tú* in their speech, since



speakers from the public-university community of practice almost never use it (only one speaker from this group uses it once in the bathroom situation). Given this, it may be possible to claim that private university students use *tú* in order to be recognized as members of a higher socio-economical class, or as members of a more prestigious community of practice. In other words, these speakers may be indicating their need to be *affiliated* to a more desirable or prestigious community of practice, and at the same time, their need to be seen as *autonomous* individuals (different from others who belong to their community of practice).

Finally, it is important to mention that not only linguistic strategies may convey the speakers' need for *affiliation* and *autonomy*. Prosodic strategies, specifically pitch effects, are closely related to components of *face*. As shown in pitch analyses of direct head-acts in the map situation (Graphs (1)-(4)) certain pitch contours convey more or less tentativeness, imposition, and deference. For example, head-acts with a Lowering-Rising pitch (Graph (1)) show tentativeness and a desire to diminish imposition and to intensify deference (*autonomy*). Head-acts with a Rising pitch indicate intensification of the imposition and less tentativeness (*autonomy*), which may imply the speaker's reinforcement of the camaraderie bonds, and a possible desire for solidarity (*affiliation*), which is acceptable in this situation where both interlocutors are good friends (-Distance). Head-acts with a Lowering pitch (Graph (3)) also seem to show imposition and closure (*autonomy*), which may only occur in situations where camaraderie bonds are reinforced (*affiliation*). Finally, although head-acts with a Sustained pitch (Graph (4)) do not show particular prosodic changes, they seem to imply the speaker's desire for solidarity and friendship (*affiliation*).

## 5.2. Socio-pragmatic variation in Colombian Spanish

In terms of regional variation, the present study shows that, contrary to what is found by Escamilla et al. (2004) in Barranquilla Spanish, Bucaramanga Spanish seems to greatly favor the use of linguistic polite expressions. In this sense, Barranquilla speakers (coastal dialect speakers) show more directness than Bucaramanga speakers (Andean dialect speakers). Furthermore, although Bucaramanga Spanish and Pasto Spanish (Southern Andean dialect) may be closer to each other than between them and Barranquilla Spanish, indirectness (CI and NCI requests) seems to be more frequent in Pasto Spanish. Although more studies should be conducted in order to construct a more accurate understanding of (im)politeness in Colombian Spanish, and more Colombian varieties should be analyzed, we propose the following continuum in order to indicate how (im)politeness may be characterized in these three dialects:

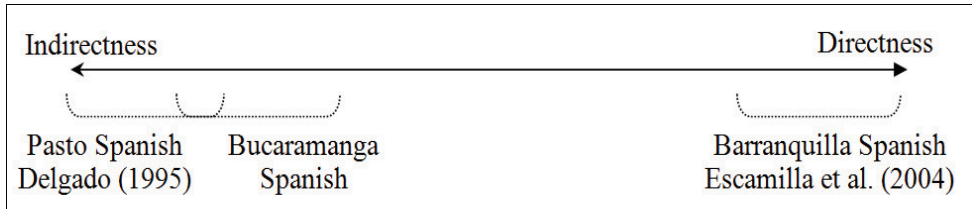


Figure 5. (In)Directness continuum in Colombian Spanish.

## 6. Conclusions

In terms of our first research question, it is possible to conclude that Direct request strategies are more commonly used in –Distance situations, whereas Conventionally Indirectness strategies are more commonly used in +Distance situations. In this sense, it has been shown that  $\pm$ Directness correlates with  $\pm$ Distance.

As for our second research question, linguistic (internal and external mitigation) and non-linguistic strategies (intonation) are widely used by these speakers to convey specific socio-cultural aspects of *face* (camaraderie, respect, deference, solidarity). These socio-cultural aspects of politeness are also shown by the use of address forms. The fact that private university students, and almost no public university student, greatly employed *tú* and *usted* interchangeably in all situations, across turns, and within turns, may indicate a need for *affiliation* to a more prestigious community of practice, and a need for *autonomy*, since they may desire to be acknowledged as different from the rest of the community.

Also, there are regional differences in the production of requests in Colombian Spanish. Unlike Barranquilla speakers, Bucaramanga speakers use linguistic devices to convey politeness and are not as direct. Similarly to Pasto speakers, Bucaramanga speakers frequently use indirect strategies, but they do not seem to be the most indirect group of all.

Finally, regarding our third research question, it has been shown that prosody directly correlates with politeness and clearly affects it. That is, different prosodic patterns are used by speakers in order to minimize or reinforce the force of the imposition conveyed in the request, and to denote speakers' needs for *affiliation* and *autonomy*.

### *Limitations and future research*

The present study is only a first attempt to the analysis of requests in Colombian Spanish. It is clear that future studies should be undertaken in order to examine the speech of a wider range of participants: from various Colombian dialectal areas, both women and men, and from a more varied age

and social range. The analysis here provided only concerned the speech of a limited population (young female university students from Bucaramanga), but it is certain that an analysis of other communities (male university students, middle-aged women and men, etc.) would help us construct a more accurate understanding of Bucaramanga Spanish in terms of speech act production. Also, other speech acts (compliments, invitations, etc.) should also be examined to broaden our understanding of pragmatic behavior in real speech situations.

In terms of the prosodic analysis, the present analysis only examines the intonation contours of direct head-acts. Further studies should be undertaken in order to clarify the effects of prosody (pitch, intensity, speed, tonal range, duration, etc.) in conversation when making requests or accomplishing other kinds of speech acts. Studies of this kind would be crucial to provide more evidence to the claim that prosody has effects on politeness and it encodes particular socio-cultural characteristics of the community under investigation.

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## Appendix A

Complete set of request situations

*Request situation 1: asking for a ride (+Distance)*

Son las 8:00 de la mañana y te diriges al trabajo manejando tu carro. Decides tomar un atajo por una zona residencial cuando de repente te quedas sin gasolina. Tienes que estar en el trabajo en una hora y no quieres dejar el carro por ahí ya que sales de trabajar a las 10:00 de la noche y luego no tienes forma de devolvarte a tu casa. Sabes que en esta zona encontrar un taxi es casi imposible; tampoco conoces a ninguna persona cerca de ahí, ni tienes teléfono celular para pedir ayuda a un amigo o familiar. Después ves a una señora que sale de su casa con sus hijos y se dirigen a su carro. Sabes que hay una estación de gasolina a unos tres kilómetros y quieres que te lleve ahí. Así

que, aunque no conoces a la señora, decides pedirle que te lleve a la estación porque necesitas llegar a tu trabajo. ¿Qué le dices?

English translation

It's 8 in the morning and you are going to work in your car. You decide to take an alternative route through a residential zone when you suddenly run out of gas. You have to be at work in an hour but you don't want to leave your car in the area because you leave work at 10 p.m. and you have no other way to get back home. You know that in this area it's almost impossible to get a taxi; you don't know anybody around there, and you don't have a cell phone to ask a friend or a relative for help. Later you see a woman coming out of her house to get in her car with her kids. You know that there is a gas station three kilometers away and you want her to take you there. So, although you don't know this person, you decide to ask her to take you to the station because you need to get to work. What do you tell her?

*Request situation 2: class notes (+ Distance)*

En el último día de clases, tu profesor de la clase de (escoge una clase de este semestre) hizo un repaso de las lecturas para el examen final y tu no asististe a clase las últimas dos semanas. Desafortunadamente, necesitas los apuntes para el examen ya que el profesor hace las preguntas de las notas que da en clase. Sabes que una de tus compañeras de clase es la única persona que tiene buenas notas y confías que ella te prestaría los apuntes. Los demás compañeros han sido un poco perezosos y a la hora de la clase hacen otras cosas menos poner atención. Decides preguntarle a esta compañera si te presta los apuntes, aunque no te hablas con ella y no la conoces bien. Sólo se tratan para realizar proyectos de clase, de vez en cuando. El día de la revisión del examen, la ves que va saliendo de clase y decides pedirle los apuntes. ¿Qué le dices?

English translation

The last day of classes, your professor for (choose a class from this semester) made a review of the readings for the final exam and you did not attend class the last two weeks. Unfortunately, you need the class notes for the exam since the professor gives questions from the reviews that he gives in class. You know that one of your classmates is the only person who takes good notes and you are confident that she would lend you her notes. The rest of the classmates have been a little lazy and during class time they do other things besides paying attention. You decide to ask this classmate if she can lend you the notes, although you don't talk much to her, and you don't know her very well. You only talk to each other when you need to do class projects, once in a

while. The day of the review for the exam, you see her as she comes out of class and you decide to ask her about the class notes. What do you say to her?

*Request situation 3: cleaning the bathroom (-Distance)*

Has convivido con tu compañera de apartamento durante dos años en tu apartamento con dos habitaciones en Bucaramanga. Te llevas muy bien con ella y se han puesto de acuerdo para hacer el aseo semanalmente. Este fin de semana te corresponde a tí lavar el baño, aunque no tendrás tiempo para hacerlo. El domingo por la tarde tus padres te visitarán y quieres que vean el apartamento limpio y ordenado. No hay ninguna posibilidad de que tú lo limpies antes del domingo y no quieres que tus padres lo vean sucio y que empiecen a criticarte. Así que decides pedirle el favor a tu compañera de apartamento. Tú y tu compañera se llevan bien y piensas que ella podría ayudarte esta ocasión. ¿Qué le dices?

English translation

You have lived with your roommate for two years in your two-room apartment in Bucaramanga. You get along with her very well and you have agreed to do the house cleaning on a weekly basis. This weekend you have to clean the bathroom, although you won't have time to do it. On Sunday afternoon your parents will visit you and you want them to see the apartment clean and tidy. There is no possibility that you clean it before Sunday and you don't want your parents to see it dirty so that they can criticize you. So, you decide to ask your roommate. You and your roommate get along very well and you think that she could help you this time. What do you tell her?

*Request situation 4: asking for directions (-Distance)*

Estás en tu carro con una buena amiga tuya y estás manejando. Conociste a esta amiga en la universidad en una de tus clases de (escoge una clase de este año) y se llevan bien. Las dos han sido invitadas a una recepción de una galería de arte y la invitación traía las direcciones y un mapa para llegar a la galería. Sin embargo, tu amiga olvidó el mapa y aunque sabe la dirección, no se acuerda cómo llegar a la galería. Tú no pusiste mucha atención a las direcciones de la invitación porque contabas con ella y estabas confiada de que ella traería el mapa. Al llegar a un semáforo en rojo, ves un peatón en la esquina. Quieres que tu amiga, quien está sentada a tu lado, le pregunte a esa persona cómo llegar a la galería con la dirección que tienen. ¿Qué le dices?

English translation

You're in your car with a good friend and you're driving. You met this friend at the university in one of your classes (choose a class from this year) and you get along well. The two of you have been invited to a cocktail party in an art



gallery, and the invitation showed directions and a map to get to the gallery. However, your friend forgot to bring the map, and although she knows the address, she doesn't remember how to get to it. You didn't pay much attention to the directions because you trusted her and you counted that she would bring the map. At a stop light, you see a pedestrian in the corner. You want your friend, who's sitting next to you, to ask that person how to get to the gallery with the address you have. What do you tell her?

## Appendix B

Transcription symbols adapted from Jefferson (2004):

,	separation between spoken segments
...	short pause
=	intervention that starts immediately after the end of another intervention
:	lengthening of a sound
[ ]	overlapping sequence
↑	rising intonation
↓	lowering intonation
<u>underlined</u>	segment where stressed is marked
<b>bold</b>	segment that shows a particular characteristic. This characteristic is described in parenthesis (( )), immediately after the segment.
(( ))	notes from the transcriber
((¿?))	one segment (one word) is not clear
?	rising intonation for the end of a question
ABC:	initials of the participant's name

## Appendix D

Classification of head-act strategies (Adapted from Blum-Kulka et al., 1989 and Márquez-Reiter, 2000):

Direct	
Mood Derivable: the grammatical mood of the verb signals illocutionary force.	<i>No, no, mírele la pinta que tiene, <u>pregúntele</u></i> 'no, no, look at his look, <u>ask him</u> '
Performative: the illocutionary force is explicitly named.	<i>Ay señora, se lo pido de verdad</i> 'Oh miss, <u>I ask you</u> truly'
Obligation Statement: states the obligation of the addressee to comply with the request.	<i>Te <u>tocó preguntarle</u> a esa persona que va pasando</i> ' <u>You have to ask</u> that person'

	who is passing by'
Need Statement: states the speaker's need that the hearer carries out the act.	<i>Necesito que por favor le pregunte</i> 'I <u>need you</u> to please ask him'
Want Statement: states the speaker's desire that the hearer carries out the act.	<i>Yo quería...que usted me acercara...</i> 'I <u>wanted</u> ... that you took me close to...'
Elliptical Direct: a request is not explicitly stated, but it is recoverable by <i>por favor</i> . The request is already stated in a previous turn.	<i>Ay OLU, por favor</i> [request e] 'Oh OLU, please'
Conventionally Indirect	
Suggestory Formulae: contain a suggestion to do something	<i>Por qué no le preguntas al señor que está ahí...?</i> ' <u>Why don't you</u> ask the man who is there?'
Query Preparatory Indicative: Reference preparatory conditions in indicative mood.	<i>¿Será que tu <u>me puedes</u> acercar a una estación?</i> ' <u>Can you</u> take me close to a station?'
Query Preparatory Cond/Imperf: Reference preparatory conditions in conditional and imperfect indicative.	<i>¿Será que <u>podrías</u> prestarme tus apuntes?</i> ' <u>Could you</u> lend me your class notes?'
Query Preparatory Fut/Subjunc: Reference preparatory conditions in modal Future and Subjunctive.	<i>Era para pedirte el favor <u>si me pudieras</u> prestar...</i> 'It was to ask you the favor <u>if you can</u> lend me...'
Non-Conventionally Indirect (Hints)	
A: Yo sé que hemos prometido turnarnos para limpiar el <u>apartamento</u> y el <u>baño</u> <u>en especial</u> ... 'I know that we have promised to take turns to clean the <u>apartment</u> and the <u>bathroom</u> <u>especially</u> ...'	
B: = ay, no me digas que me vas a pedir el favor de que lave el <u>baño</u> que es lo que más detesto 'oh, don't tell me that you're going to ask me to clean the <u>bathroom</u> which is what I hate <u>the most</u> '	

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