

# The role of prosody in requests produced by young female university students from Bucaramanga, Colombia

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## Abstract:

The literature on speech acts in Colombian Spanish has been limited, and only a handful of studies have analyzed requests in this particular dialect (Delgado, 1995; Escamilla et al., 2004). Taking into account Bravo's (2004) framework on politeness, the present study analyzes the manifestations of *affiliation* and *autonomy* in the production of requests among young Colombian women (N=10) in comparable situations, presented in a symmetrical system (-Power), and with two degrees of social distance (+/-Distance). The data were examined according to a modified version of the request classification by Blum Kulka, S., House, J., and Kasper, G., (1989) and Márquez Reiter (2000): i. Direct requests; ii. Conventionally indirect requests, and iii. Non-conventionally indirect requests. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, by means of a statistical program. Given that prosodic effects in the realization of requests have been scarcely studied, the role of prosodic devices of mitigation was closely examined in relation to *politeness* and *face*. Spectrograms containing intonation patterns were acquired, and pitch analyses of direct head acts were obtained by means of computer software. The results show that, in terms of frequency, Direct requests constitute the most common strategy, followed by Conventionally-Indirect requests, and Non-conventionally indirect requests. However, a closer look at direct requests suggest that the type of situation, and the intonation patterns utilized satisfactorily license the use of this type of request. This suggests a direct relation between prosody and politeness in the realization of requests. The results of the study also 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. These socio-cultural tendencies are evidenced by means of not only linguistic devices (politeness markers, intensifiers, diminutives, etc.), but also non-linguistic devices (intonation contours).

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