

**Abstract**

This study was designed to examine the reasons why students in a university English class in Mexico decided to use either the formal or informal form of address with the teacher/researcher and whether speech communities were a factor in that decision. The speech communities used in this study were defined by the characteristics of age, status (professor or student) and sex. The students were approximately half male and half female, Mexican and between the ages of 18 and 29 at the time of the study. The researcher was an American female graduate student teaching assistant and was 23, turning 24 during the study. The students and the researcher shared membership to the age, student and sometimes sex speech communities. Data was collected through tape-recorded classes, ethnographical observations, emails and MSN conversations, Discourse Completion Task questionnaires and interviews. The results show that there are four primary factors that the students used to decide what form of address to use with the researcher. These were social setting, their upbringing, speech communities and type of relationship. This study is of use to Spanish foreign language students who want to acquire more communicative competence in Mexican Spanish. Since this study is in the qualitative research paradigm and within just one university, the results cannot be generalized to describe all Spanish pragmatics; however, they can provide suggestions to Spanish students as to some factors to take into account when deciding what form of address to use.