

Sociolinguistic Perceptions of *Tú*, *Usted* and *Vos* in the Highlands of Ecuador

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Abstract

The Spanish pronouns '*Tú*', '*Usted*' and '*Vos*' all translate into the English second person singular '*You*'. However, this does not mean that they convey the same meaning. In Ecuador, for example, the pronoun *Usted* is normally used to signal formality, distance, and not familiarity; and, *Tú* and *Vos* are often used to signal friendship, closeness, and informality. In addition, these pronouns adopt different meanings depending on where in Ecuador the interaction takes place. For example, in a reciprocal relationship between classmates, *Vos* implies friendship and closeness in the city of Cuenca, but in the city of Quito *Vos* implies lack of respect. In this sense, this study examines how college students perceive the usage of these pronouns at home, at the university, and at the workplace. This paper analyses samples taken from three cities in the highlands—Quito, Cuenca, and Loja—and describes how these pronouns are being used at these locations in Ecuador. The results reveal this very peculiar variation and show the different meanings and tendencies of these pronouns.

Keywords: Pronoun usage in Ecuador, Sociolinguistics, Pronoun variation, Language and society

1. Introduction

In Spanish, either *Tú*, *Usted*, or *Vos* can be used to address the second person singular. Thus, in a conversation, two individuals could actually address each other with any of these pronouns. The Spanish pronouns *Tú*, *Usted*, and *Vos* are all equivalent to the English singular pronoun “you”; however, these pronouns do not exactly convey the same meaning. In Ecuador, for example, when addressing a person with the pronoun *Usted*, the interlocutor for whatever reason may want to signal distance, formality, or perhaps intimacy. In fact, when referring to the usage of these pronouns in Ecuador, Cordero de Espinosa (2004) mentioned that *Usted* takes on different meanings that go from politeness and distance to intimacy and closeness such as boyfriend and girlfriend alternating between *Usted* and *Tú* when addressing each other (pp. 473-74). The distinction between these pronouns also depends on factors such as age, career, and the social hierarchy of the interlocutors (Ansaldo, 2011: 86-87). For instance, at a university setting, although professors will reciprocally address each other with *Tú* or *Usted*, students will mostly address professors with *Usted* but professors will address them back with *Tú*. However, this power semantic relationship may not hold constant in all the speech communities along the highlands of Ecuador.

Employing these pronouns can be confusing because *Tú*, *Usted*, and *Vos* do not operate similarly in the whole region. They actually function differently depending on where in Ecuador the interaction takes place. For example, a student at a university in Quito will reciprocally address their classmates with *Tú*, but a student at a university in Loja will address their classmates with either *Tú* or *Vos*. This peculiar variation, which is also a function of social strata, occurs because within the Ecuadorian speech community, smaller speech communities treat these pronouns differently. In fact, Lipski (1994) observed that the mixing of *Tú* and *Vos* was frequent in the speech of rural and urban Ecuadorians along the highlands. He mentioned that “...even educated urban Ecuadorians exhibit greater variation of voseo than is common in Central America and South Cone nations” (pp. 245-50).

Not much research has been generated around these pronouns in Ecuador. However, the few studies conducted have certainly portrayed how these pronouns have generally been used since last century. One of the first investigations addressing the usage of *Tú*, *Usted*, and *Vos* in Ecuador was conducted by Toscano Mateus. So, while depicting the linguistic situation in Ecuador during the first half of the 20th century, Toscano (1953) mentioned that *Usted* was used to address people with respect or because the interlocutors were not familiar with each other (pp. 200-1). Also, when referring to the pronoun *Vos*, he said that it was the proper pronoun to address parents and the appropriate pronoun between husband and wife (p. 197). Additionally, when describing the pronoun *Tú*, he pointed out that educated young people in the city of Quito preferred to use the pronoun *Tú* instead of the pronoun *Vos* in their daily talking (p. 37).

Twenty years later, at a university in Quito, Miño (1976) conducted a study and found that *Usted* was the pronoun of respect, but in vertical communication it showed distance. Regarding the pronoun *Vos*, he found that in a horizontal communication the pronoun *Vos* implied familiarity, but in vertical communication *Vos* entailed a discriminating meaning.

When referring to the pronoun *Tú*, he said that in vertical communication *Tú* did not occur; however, in horizontal communication *Tú* implied solidarity and friendship (pp. 30-31). Toward the end of the 80's, Peñaherrera (1988) found that while the reciprocal *Tú* prevailed in his younger participants, *Vos* was still present within a family setting as an informal manner of intimacy. He mentioned that his participants would tend to replace *Vos* with *Tú* in interactions outside the family (p. 52).

Moving on to the first decade of the twenty first century, Alvarez (2005) argued that in the younger generations, there was a growing tendency of using the pronoun *Tú* among people who shared the same profession and among those who did not show any salient difference in age or categorical position. Alvarez said that even in contexts where higher levels of politeness were expected such as students addressing professors, the form of address was still *Tú* (p. 2). In fact, Haboud and De la Vega (2008) commented that in the upper social strata, there is a tendency to address older people with *Tú* such as students addressing professors with the pronoun *Tú*. In this particular sense, when referring to the Hispanic communities, Pedroviejo (2004) commented that the usage of *Tú* has grown to become a polite and adequate form of treatment as a result of a modern and democratic society in which prejudices and social hierarchy are being alienated (p. 250). While such argument around *Tú* is valid, generalizing it to the entire speech community is not because smaller speech communities, especially in Ecuador, treat these pronouns differently. That is, while certain social strata in the city of Quito finds it adequate to address their professors with *Tú*, people in other cities (e.g. Cuenca and Loja) do not find it appropriate to address their professors with *Tú*, but would instead address their professors with *Usted*.

Haboud and De la Vega (2008) mentioned that *Usted* is used to show respect and distance among people of the same social group. They pointed out that *Usted* is used to address parents, but parents would generally address children with *Tú*. Regarding the pronoun *Vos*, they mentioned that in the city of Quito this pronoun is still used by older people and by some youngsters who define themselves as belonging to the upper social strata; in that sense, these youngsters would use *Vos* as a pronoun of superiority to address people who work as housekeepers, vendors, maintenance personnel, masons, etc. Similarly, *Vos* would be used when the speaker, who defines himself or herself as superior, replies to expressions or attitudes considered disrespectful (pp. 173-175).

To summarize, the pronoun *Usted* has consistently been described as the pronoun of respect, politeness, distance and not familiarity. However, it is also described as a pronoun of intimacy and closeness such as boyfriend and girlfriend alternating between *Usted* and *Tú*. As for the pronoun *Vos*, it was mentioned that during the first half of the twentieth century, *Vos* was the proper pronoun to address parents and spouses; however, the pronoun *Vos* was also described as a pronoun of superiority entailing a negative connotation (Miño, 1976; Haboud and De la Vega, 2008). On the other hand, *Vos* has also been described as the pronoun of familiarity, informality and intimacy. As for the pronoun *Tú*, it was described as the pronoun of friendship as well as the pronoun of the young and the educated; and, although *Tú* appears to be an adequate form to address older people such as professors, parents still expect to be addressed with *Usted* by their children.

Then, what is the appropriate form of address? Does it only depend on factors such as age, career, and social strata? Or, sketching a generalizable pattern of pronoun usage is just not possible. I believe that the issue mainly lies on the usage of these pronouns by different generations across different speech communities. That is, different generations and smaller speech communities within Ecuador perceive and use the pronouns differently. So, it is important to analyze how new generations in these smaller speech communities are perceiving the usage of these pronouns. Comparing how these pronouns are being used in different cities of Ecuador will certainly portray a better picture. In that sense, college students represent this new generation and the cities of Quito, Cuenca, and Loja represent the smaller speech communities within the big speech community of Ecuador. Therefore, this paper will look at how college students from these cities perceive the usage of these pronouns. The question that will guide this study is: How do college students from these cities—Quito, Cuenca, and Loja—perceive the usage of these pronouns at home, at the university, and at the workplace?

2. The Participants

The instrument to gather data was a questionnaire which contained both closed- and open-ended questions. The results are presented in terms of frequencies in relation to the closed-ended questions, and descriptively in terms of the one open-ended question which explicitly asked for their perception on the usage of these pronouns. In addition to these pronoun specific questions, the questionnaire also elicited background information from the participants; this information is described below.

The questionnaire was administered to college students while they were in class. That is, the samples were convenient and participants were not randomly selected. Also, one of the samples was collected at a public university while the other two samples were collected at private universities.

2.1 Participants in Quito

The questionnaire was administered to 17 arts students at a large university in Quito. The age of the subjects ranged from 18 to 26 with an average age of 20, and there were 14 females and 3 male participants; that is, 82% were female. All of the students were Spanish native speakers and had lived in the city of Quito for at least 15 years. They reported to normally interact with people from middle and middle-high social class.

2.2 Participants in Cuenca

The questionnaire was administered to 21 arts students at a large university in Cuenca. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 28 with an average age of 21, and there were 15 females and 6 male participants; that is, 71% were female. All of the students were Spanish native speakers and had lived in the city of Cuenca for at least 15 years. They reported to normally interact with people from middle and middle-low social class.

2.3 Participants in Loja

The questionnaire was administered to 19 science students at a large university in Loja. The ages of the participants range from 20 to 28 with an average age of 22, and there were 4 females and 15 male participants; that is, 21% were female. All of the subjects were Spanish

native speakers and had lived in the city of Loja for at least 15 years. They reported to normally interact with people from middle and middle-high social class.

3. The Results

This section presents the results of the 57 university participants. It is divided into three sub-section: 3.1) pronouns in Quito, 3.2) pronouns in Cuenca, and 3.3) pronouns in Loja. The results are visually displayed in graphs and charts. The graphs present the aggregate percentage of pronoun usage and the charts depict more specifically the tendencies of pronoun usage for parents, grandparents, spouses, bosses, co-workers, professors, and classmates in relation to the participants.

3.1 Pronouns in Quito

Participants in Quito did not actually report the pronoun *Vos*, except for an extreme small percentage at home. Also, at home and at the university, the pronoun *Usted* constitutes only 1/3 in comparison to 2/3 of the pronoun *Tú*. And, at the workplace, both *Usted* and *Tú* are used proportionally; that is, the two pronouns share equal amounts of usage, 1/2 each. For these participants, the pronoun *Tú* is much more frequent. (See graph 1 below).

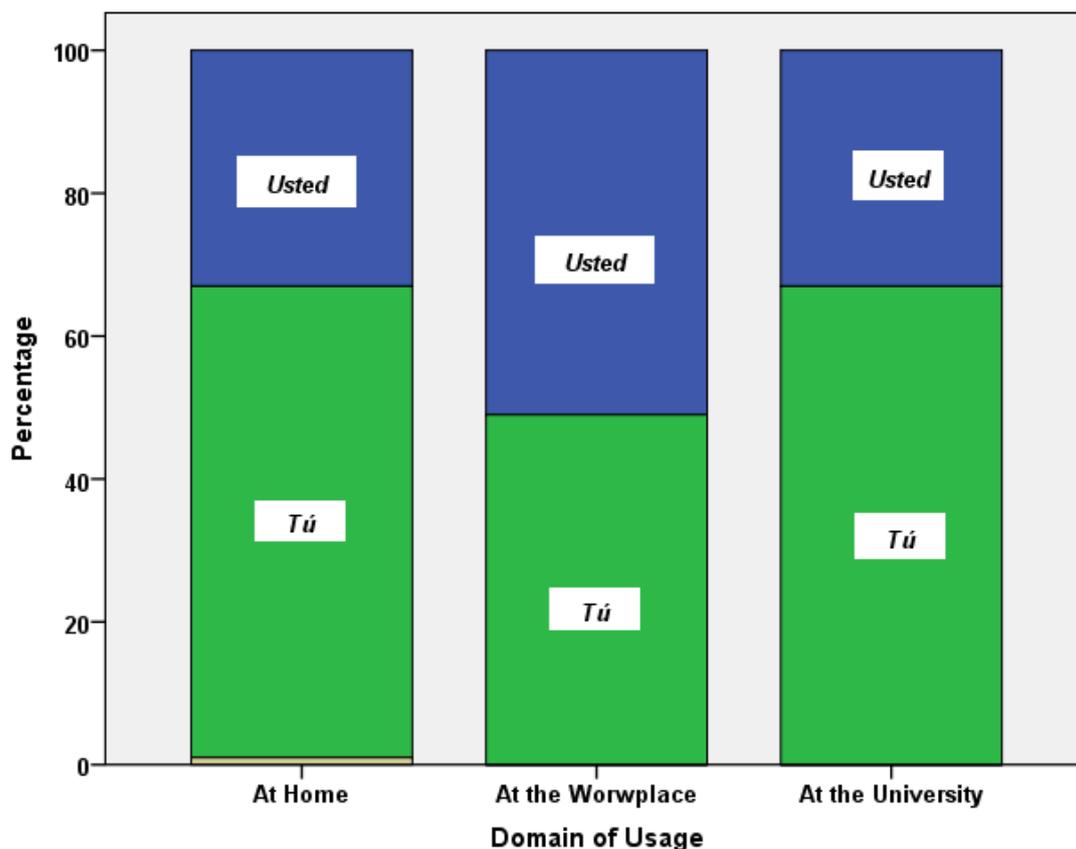


Figure 1. Aggregate pronoun usage in Quito

At home, regarding the participants' relationship with their parents and grandparents, they reported that while they use *Tú* (53%) or *Usted* (47%) to address their parents, their parents use *Tú* (88%) to address them. Moreover, while participants use *Usted* (88%) to address their

grandparents, their grandparents use *Tú* (88%) to address them. Also, when asked which pronoun is more appropriate between husband and wife, the participants said *Tú* (88%). (See chart 1 below).

Chart 1: ¹ *Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at Home*

Participants & their parents	Participants & their grandparents	Participants & spouses
Parents → T → Participants Parents ← T ← Participants Parents ← U ← Participants	Grandparents → T → Participants Grandparents ← U ← Participants	Husband ↔ T ↔ Wife
‘ T ’ stands for <i>Tú</i> ; ‘ U ’ stands for <i>Usted</i> & ‘ V ’ stands for <i>Vos</i> .		

At the workplace in relation to bosses and coworkers, the participants reported that while they use *Usted* (82%) or *Tú* (18%) to address their bosses, their bosses use *Tú* (53%) or *Usted* (47%) to address them. Also, the participants mentioned that they use *Tú* (76%) or *Usted* (24%) to address their coworkers. (See chart 2 below).

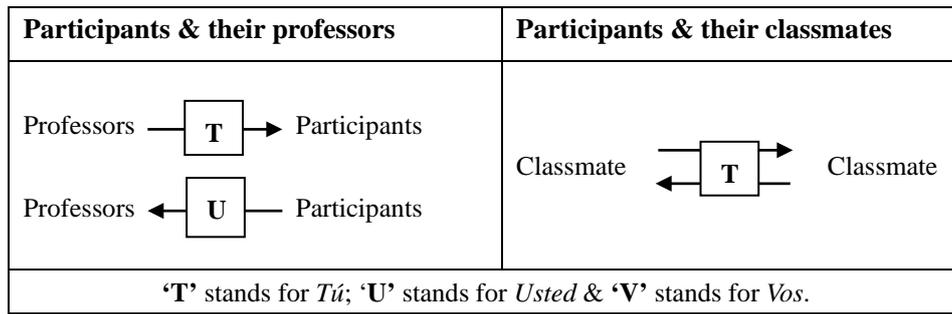
Chart 2. *Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at the Workplace*

Participants & their bosses	Participants & their co-workers
Boss → T → Participants Boss → U → Participants Boss ← U ← Participants	Co-worker ↔ T ↔ Co-worker
‘ T ’ stands for <i>Tú</i> ; ‘ U ’ stands for <i>Usted</i> & ‘ V ’ stands for <i>Vos</i> .	

At the university, in relation to professors-students, the participants reported that they use *Usted* (71%) or *Tú* (29%) to address their professors, but their professors use *Tú* (71%) or *Usted* (29%) to address them. So, participants basically address professors with *Usted* and professors address them with *Tú*. When asked which pronoun is appropriate to use among classmates, all of them reported *Tú* (100%). (See chart 3 below).

¹ Only percentages at 33% (i.e. at least 1/3) or higher were considered when graphing these tendencies.

Chart 3. *Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at the University*



3.2 Pronouns in Cuenca

In Cuenca, participants sketched a somewhat different scheme with the three pronouns showing up. At home, for example, *Tú*, *Usted* and *Vos* are equally frequent, approximately 1/3 each. At the workplace and at the university, on the other hand, the pronoun *Usted* takes on approximately 2/3 of usage. The other 1/3 is shared by the pronouns *Tú* and *Vos*, where *Tú* is reported to be twice as frequent as *Vos*. (See graph 2 below).

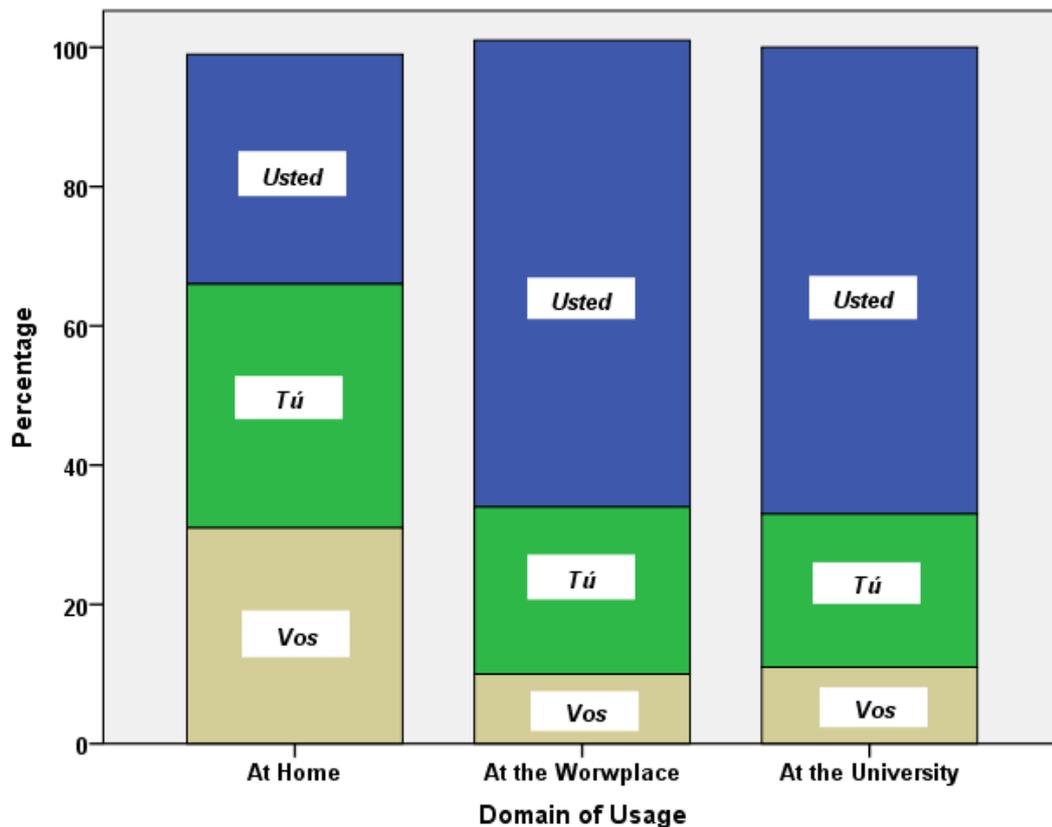
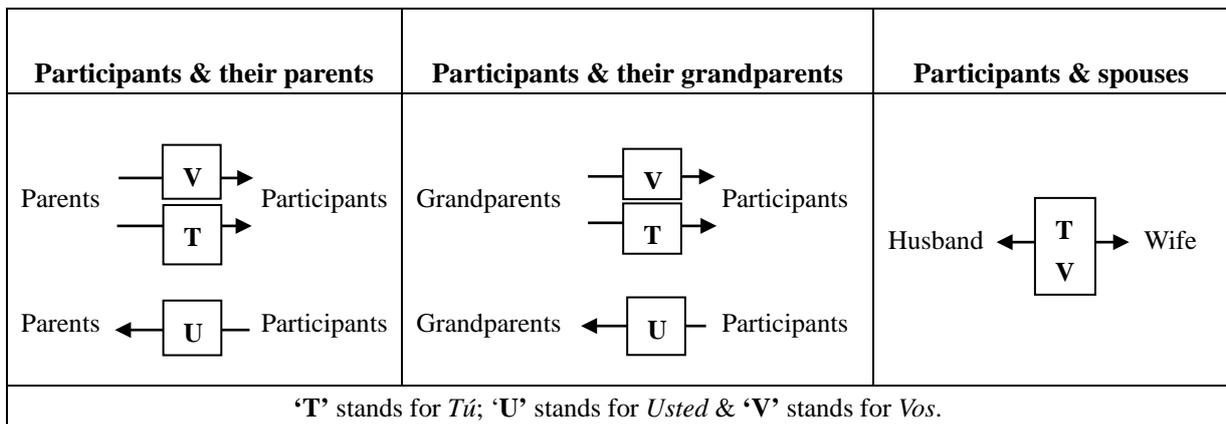


Figure 2. Aggregate pronoun usage in Cuenca

At home, in relation to parents, grandparents and spouses, the scenario is different due to the appearance of the pronoun *Vos*. To illustrate, when addressing parents, participants use *Usted*

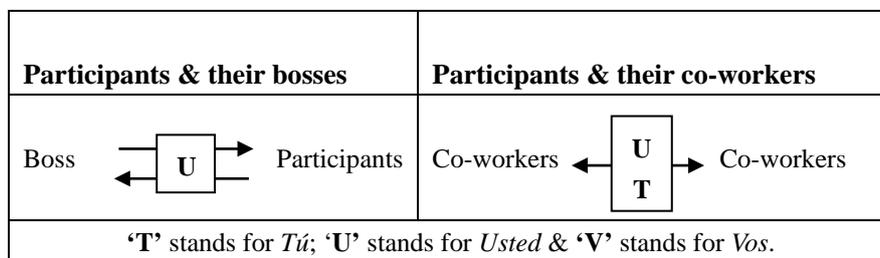
(52%), *Tú* (29%) or *Vos* (19%); however, their parents address them back basically with *Vos* (48%) or *Tú* (43%). Furthermore, when addressing their grandparents, they mostly use *Usted* (90%); yet, their grandparents address them with *Vos* (52%) or *Tú* (43%). Additionally, when asked which pronoun is appropriate between husband and wife, they mainly reported *Tú* (57%) or *Vos* (33%). (See chart 4 below).

Chart 4. *Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at Home*



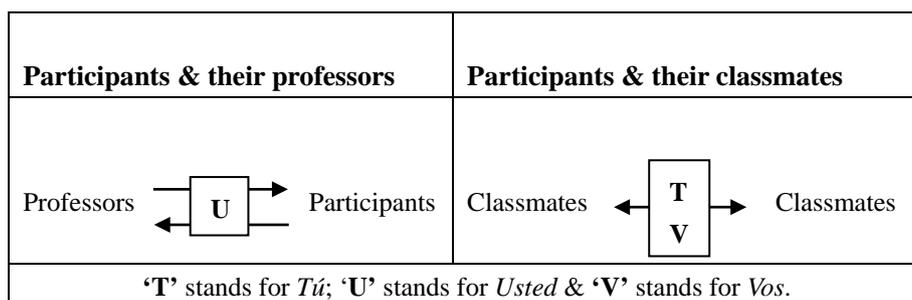
At the workplace, bosses (76%) as well as participants (81%) use *Usted* to address each other. However, when addressing co-workers, they use either *Usted* (43%) or *Tú* (43%). (See chart 5 below).

Chart 5. *Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at the Workplace*



At the university, the participants reported that they address their professors with *Usted* (100%). Similarly, their professors address them with *Usted* (90%). However, when interacting with their classmates, they reported to address each other with *Tú* (57%) or *Vos* (33%). (See chart 6 below).

Chart 6. *Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at the University*



3.3 Pronouns in Loja

The appearance of the pronoun *Vos* in the city of Loja portrays a somewhat similar situation than in the city of Cuenca. The distribution of *Vos* constitutes roughly 1/10 in the three domains of usage; that is, approximately 90 percent is shared by *Tú* and *Usted*. At home, *Tú* takes approximately 1/2 and *Usted* takes a little less than 1/2. At the workplace and at the university, *Usted* takes on roughly a little less than 2/3, and *Tú* takes approximately 1/3.

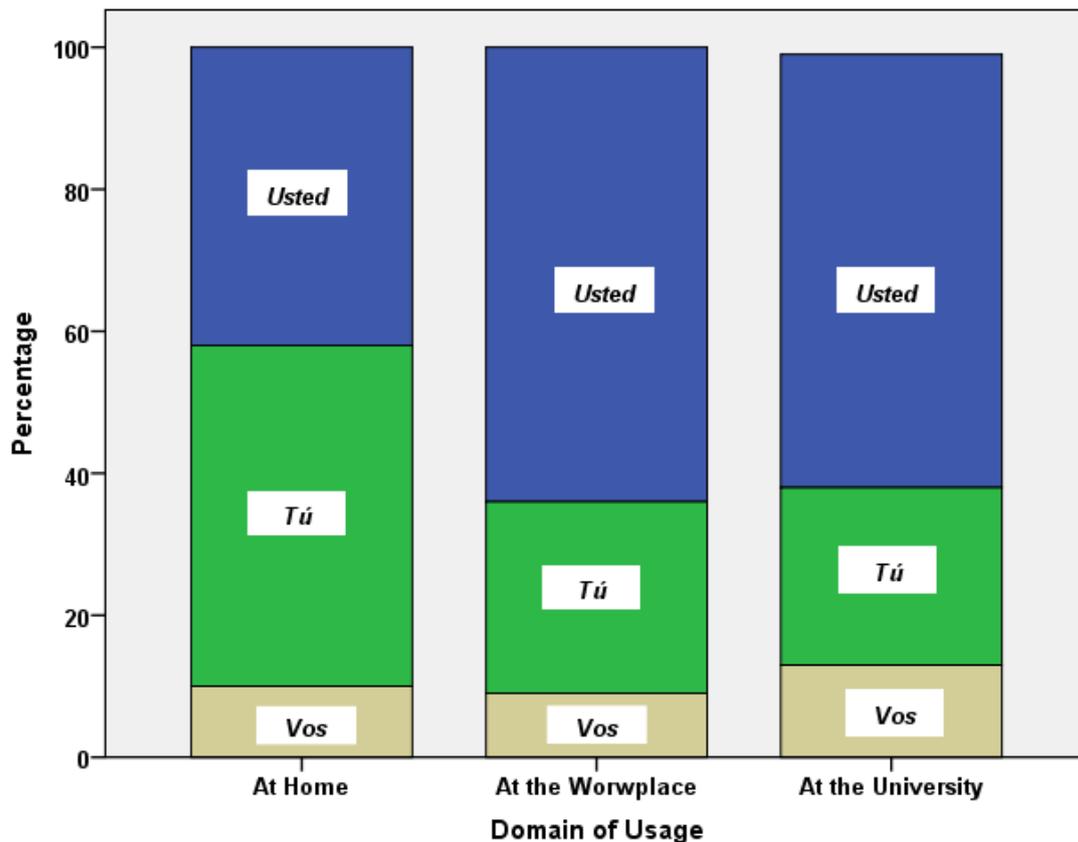


Figure 3. Aggregate pronoun usage in Loja

At home, participants address their parents with *Usted* (79%), but their parents address them with *Tú* (74%). Likewise, they address their grandparents with *Usted* (100%), but their grandparents address them back with *Tú* (74%). Between husband and wife, participants reported *Tú* (71%). (See chart 7 below).

Chart 7. Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at Home

Participants & their parents	Participants & their grandparents	Participants & spouses
Parents → T → Participants Parents ← U ← Participants	Grandparents → T → Participants Grandparents ← U ← Participants	Husband ↔ T ↔ Wife
‘T’ stands for <i>Tú</i> ; ‘U’ stands for <i>Usted</i> & ‘V’ stands for <i>Vos</i> .		

In Loja, the relationship between bosses and coworkers with the participants is less tangled. While bosses (79%) and participants (95%) address each other with *Usted*, co-workers address each other with *Tú* (61%). (See chart 8 below)

Chart 8. Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at the Workplace

Participants & their bosses	Participants & their co-workers
Boss ↔ U ↔ Participants	Co-workers ↔ T ↔ Co-workers
‘T’ stands for <i>Tú</i> ; ‘U’ stands for <i>Usted</i> & ‘V’ stands for <i>Vos</i> .	

In Loja, at the University, participants reported that professors (100%) and students (84%) address each other with *Usted*. However, to address their classmates, they use *Tú* (60%) or *Vos* (40%). (See chart 9 below).

Chart 9. Tendencies of Pronoun Usage at the University

Participants & their professors	Participants & their classmates
Professors ↔ U ↔ Participants	Classmates ↔ T V ↔ Classmates
‘T’ stands for <i>Tú</i> ; ‘U’ stands for <i>Usted</i> & ‘V’ stands for <i>Vos</i> .	

4. The Findings

This section is divided in three sub-sections: 4.1 Pronoun usage in Quito, 4.2 Pronoun usage in Cuenca, and 4.3 Pronoun usage in Loja. This section combines two types of data—the frequencies and the open responses of the participants. The first paragraph in each subsection describes the frequencies and the tendencies of pronoun usage, and the second paragraph in the same subsection addresses the open responses of the participants regarding pronoun

usage.

4.1 Pronoun Usage in Quito

In the city of Quito, the pronoun *Tú* is the most frequent. At home, *Tú* takes approximately 64%, *Usted* takes 34%, and *Vos* takes 2%. At the university, *Tú* takes approximately 66% and *Usted* takes 34%. And, at the workplace, *Tú* and *Usted* take 50% each. Thus, *Tú* appears to be the most popular pronoun in Quito. In fact, parents and grandparents address their children and grandchildren with *Tú*; however, grandchildren address their grandparents with *Usted*; and children address their parents with either *Tú* or *Usted*. Similarly, professors address students with *Tú*, but students address professor with *Usted*; and, while bosses address employees with *Tú* or *Usted*, employees address their bosses with *Usted*. So, it appears that *Usted* is the appropriate pronoun to address older people, which also means that *Usted* is a pronoun that portrays respect. Additionally, *Tú* is the reciprocal pronoun between husband and wife, co-workers, and classmates. This means that *Tú* is also a pronoun that portrays respect but used among people who share similar characteristics such as age, career, status, and so forth. So, in a power semantic relationship, *Tú* is the pronoun of power and *Usted* is the pronoun of reverence. Likewise, in a solidarity semantic relationship, the reciprocal pronoun among equals is *Tú*.

When participants in Quito were asked about these pronouns, they said that *Usted* is the proper pronoun to address older people as well as the pronoun of respect, social distance and not familiarity; so, an unfamiliar person is addressed with *Usted* and a familiar person is addressed with *Tú*. Also, participants mentioned that *Tú* is the pronoun for friends, acquaintances, fellows, and family members as well as the pronoun used among people of the same age. And, while *Usted* is the pronoun of formality, *Tú* is neither formal nor informal. As for the pronoun *Vos*, participants in Quito mentioned that this pronoun is way too informal and used among people who share a strong relationship of trust. On the other hand, they also mentioned that *Vos* is used to address people in a despicable manner, to insult others and to show disrespect. This may seem contradictory, but since *Vos* is a pronoun that entails strong bonds of trust, it may happen that the bond of trust is not mutually accepted. For example, in a social interaction between two people who share similar characteristics, one of the interlocutors may address the other person with *Vos*. However, if the addressee does not feel that there is a relationship of trust, she/he might feel offended. Perhaps, the addressee may feel that although both share similar characteristics, she/he is superior in one of these characteristics and interprets it as an act of insubordination. It might happen as if the boundaries of personal space have been violated.

4.2 Pronoun Usage in Cuenca

In the city of Cuenca, the geography of the pronouns changes with the three pronouns clearly showing up in all domains. At home, *Tú*, *Usted*, and *Vos* take 33% each; and, at the workplace and at the university, *Usted* takes approximately 65%, *Tú* takes 25%, and *Vos* takes 10%. Thus, in the city of Cuenca, the most popular pronoun seems to be *Usted*. At home, parents and grandparents address their children and their grandchildren with either *Vos* or *Tú*. However, grandchildren address their grandparents with *Usted*; and, although children

address their parents with either *Tú*, *Usted*, or *Vos*, they mostly address their parents with *Usted*. On the other hand, between boss and employee, and between professor and student, the reciprocal pronoun is *Usted*. Also, between classmates, and husband and wife, the reciprocal pronoun is either *Tú* or *Vos*, but between co-workers the reciprocal pronoun is either *Tú* or *Usted*. Regarding these reciprocal relationships, it can be inferred from the boss-employee and professor-student relationships that *Usted* is the pronoun of respect and formality. Likewise, it seems reasonable to conclude that *Tú* and *Vos* are the pronouns of closeness and intimacy since they are used between classmates and spouses. The pronoun *Vos* is not used between co-workers, so *Tú* seems to be more formal than *Vos*, but less formal than *Usted*. Additionally, it seems that in Cuenca, *Tú* and *Vos* are the pronouns of power and *Usted* is the pronoun of reverence. Also, while *Usted* is the pronoun of formality, *Tú* and *Vos* are the pronouns of closeness and intimacy.

Participants in Cuenca, when asked about these pronouns, mentioned that *Usted* is the proper pronoun to address professors, bosses, and older people. This pronoun signals politeness, respect, hierarchy, and formality. *Usted* is used to address unfamiliar and unknown people as well as within a professional environment to address people who have some kind of higher rank. Regarding *Tú*, participants mentioned that *Tú* is informal and used with people one knows and interacts frequently such as classmates. *Tú* entails a relationship of trust and is used among people of the same age as a marker of informality. However, if *Tú* is used to address parents or older people, it implies lack of respect. As far as *Vos* is concerned, participants mentioned that *Vos* is used to address very familiar people such as friends and family members. *Vos* is semi-formal and used when the relationship of trust is strong. It shows respect and is used within a framework of relaxation when people tell jokes and utter fanny phrases. However, same as *Tú*, *Vos* signals lack of respect when addressing parents or older people. Participants mentioned that while *Tú* and *Vos* express respect, these pronouns are informal and used when the relationship of trust among friends is very strong.

4.3 Pronoun Usage in Loja

In the city of Loja, participants portrayed a somewhat distinct picture as well. While *Tú*, *Usted*, and *Vos* are certainly present in all domains, at home, *Tú* takes 50%, *Usted* takes 40%, and *Vos* takes 10%. However, at the workplace and at the University, the pronoun geography in Loja is similar to Cuenca; that is, *Usted* takes approximately 60%, *Tú* takes 30%, and *Vos* takes roughly 10%. Thus, similar to Cuenca, *Usted* appears to be the most frequent pronoun in the city of Loja; the pronouns seem to be more stable though. That is, parents and grandparents address their children and grandchildren with *Tú*, and parents and grandparents receive *Usted*. Similarly, Bosses and employees as well as professors and students reciprocally address each other with *Usted*. And, although classmates address each other with either *Tú* or *Vos*, co-workers as well as husband and wife reciprocally address each other with *Tú*. So, it seems that in a nonreciprocal relationship, *Tú* is the pronoun of power and *Usted* is the pronoun of reverence. Additionally, in a reciprocal relationship, *Usted* appears to be the pronoun of formality, distance and respect; and *Tú* is the pronoun of intimacy, closeness and respect.

When the participants in Loja were asked about these pronouns, they commented that *Usted* is the proper pronoun to address parents, grandparents, older people, and unfamiliar people. They mentioned that *Usted* is the pronoun of respect and politeness. On the other hand, *Tú* is the pronoun of moderate respect and used with friends when there is a relationship of trust. *Tú* is used with people who are younger or the same age. As for the pronoun *Vos*, the opinions were divided. While some participants mentioned that *Vos* is used to address friends informally, others mentioned that *Vos* denotes lack of respect and a word used to look down on people. Some participants even described *Vos* as a vulgar and coarse word.

5. Final Remarks

In the city of Quito, *Usted* is the proper pronoun to address older people. It is the pronoun of respect, formality, not familiarity, and social distance. *Tú* is the pronoun for friends, acquaintances, fellows, and family members. On the other hand, while the pronoun *Vos* is way too informal and used with addressees who share a strong relationship of trust, the pronoun *Vos* is generally used to look down on people and to address people in a despicable manner. So, it would be very disrespectful to address parents, grandparents, bosses, or professors with *Vos*. Even addressing spouses, co-workers, and classmates would not be appropriate.

In the city of Cuenca, *Usted* is the pronoun of respect, formality, politeness, and hierarchy. It is the proper pronoun to address professors, bosses and older people. While *Tú* is informal and used with people one interacts frequently such as classmates, *Tú* is more formal than *Vos*. *Tú* implies a relationship of trust and is used with people of the same age as a marker of informality. Additionally, although *Tú* and *Vos* are the pronouns of closeness and intimacy, *Vos* is used when the relationship of trust is strong; so, the pronoun *Vos* is used to address very familiar people such as friends and family members. The pronoun *Vos* regularly surfaces in relaxed and informal interactions when people tell jokes or utter fanny phrases.

In the city of Loja, *Usted* is the proper pronoun to address parents, grandparents, and older people. It is the pronoun of respect, not familiarity, and politeness. *Tú* is the pronoun of moderate respect and used with friends when there is a relationship of trust. It is also the pronoun for spouses, co-workers and classmates. On the other hand, *Vos* is used to address friends informally, but *Vos* is also a vulgar a coarse word that portrays disrespect.

Thus, the pronouns are indeed perceived differently at these different speech communities. While the most apparent feature is appearance of the pronoun *Vos* in the three domains of usage in the cities of Cuenca and Loja, *Vos* does not actually show up in city of Quito. Also, the most frequent pronoun in Quito is *Tú*; and, the most frequent pronoun in Cuenca and Loja is *Usted*. In terms of the power semantic relationship (non-reciprocal) between these pronouns, it is evident that *Tú* is the pronoun of power and *Usted* is the pronoun of reverence; however, in the city of Cuenca, both *Tú* and *Vos* are the pronouns of power as dictated by the relationship of parents and grandparents. In relation to the solidarity semantic relationship (reciprocal), *Tú* is the pronoun of solidarity in Quito and Loja, but in Cuenca this function is shared by *Tú* and *Vos*.

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