

SPANISH FORMS OF ADDRESS IN ADVERTISING AND MARKETING DOCUMENTS IN MADRID: RESPECT AND POLITENESS

DIANE R. UBER

THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER WOOSTER, OHIO

Spanish Forms of Address in Advertising and Marketing Documents in Madrid:

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Diane R. Uber

The College of Wooster

Wooster, Ohio

Introduction

During social or professional interactions, it is common to wonder how different individuals should be addressed. When is it appropriate to use the given name (Carol, Brian)? When should the title plus surname be used (Miss/Ms./Mrs./Mr. Henderson)? In Spanish, as well as English, the title plus family name is considered a more formal type of address than the first name, which is more informal. Generally, the formal address is used with strangers, with people who are older than the speaker, and with someone worthy of respect.

In addition to first and last names, second-person pronouns are also forms of address. In English there exists only one form, *you*, in both singular and plural (plus the dialectal variants <u>y'all</u>, <u>you guys</u>, and <u>yinz</u> in the plural). However, in Spanish one must choose between <u>tú</u>, <u>yos</u> (in some parts of Latin America), and <u>usted</u> for the singular. For the plural, in parts of Spain, a speaker must choose between <u>vosotros/vosotras</u> and <u>ustedes</u>, while only <u>ustedes</u> is used for the plural in Latin America.

Verbal forms corresponding to the second-person pronouns are as follows in the present indicative:

tú + second-person singular (estudias/comprendes/escribes)

usted + third-person singular (estudia/comprende/escribe)

vosotros/as + second-person plural (estudiáis/comprendéis/escribís)

ustedes + third-person plural (estudian/comprenden/escriben)

Regarding the social meaning of second-person singular pronouns of address in Spanish, the formal usted could be characterized as more polite than the informal tú and vos.

Methodology

This study¹ is part of a larger project, begun in 1995, collecting business documents and studying address forms in the workplace in Santiago de Chile, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Caracas, San Jose de Costa Rica, Mexico City, San Luis Potosí, San Juan de Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Santiago de los Caballeros, and Madrid (see Uber 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000a, 2000b, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2011, 2012). Data from workplaces in Madrid, Spain illustrate some issues that are important for conducting international business. A complete understanding of the culture and pragmatics of business must include the concepts of

- > respect, and
- > politeness,

as well as how these concepts are reflected in the forms used to address the customer.

Forms of Address

Spanish-language address forms reflect these concepts of respect and politeness in the workplace. With **age** and **higher rank** comes **respect**, which would dictate usage of the more formal address: *usted*.

People with whom a worker is not acquainted are also addressed with *usted*, such as walk-in customers.

Norms of **politeness** dictate that one should be accommodating toward the addressee.

(The idea is something like: "Be nice, so that the customer does not lose face.")

Politeness can be manifest in the form of the respectful, deferential

- > usted in the singular and
- ustedes in the plural (for Madrid),

plus the corresponding verb forms.

Alternatively, **politeness** can also dictate informal address:

- \triangleright tú in the singular, and
- > vosotros in the plural (for Madrid),

plus the corresponding verb forms.

This informal address can be used:

- toward those sharing equal social status (in all types of usages and situations), or
- to show confidence and solidarity toward the consumer in business encounters,
 advertising and marketing.

Examples

Examples from marketing and advertising will illustrate these different usages geared toward different audiences. Included are newspaper advertisements, surveys and forms to be filled out, product labels, and instructions to the customer.

Newspapers

Advertisements from newspapers employ different address forms for different target markets.

Surveys and Forms

- Given that they are generally distributed to unknown people, surveys employ *usted*.
- Forms to fill out upon registration at a hotel employ *usted*, because the employees are generally not acquainted with the clients at check-in.

Product labels and instructions

Address usage can vary in such marketing tools. For example, a colorful sticker on the front of a product employs $t\hat{u}$. Instructions on the back of a label, and on the fold-up technical information use infinitives, because they are addressed to no one in particular. A specific recommendation to the consumer uses usted, because it is more direct.

Use of *Usted*

Ads directed to business executives or to elderly people generally show respect, and tend to use *usted*.

Advertisements for financial assistance address the targeted customer with *usted* also, to show respect, and to try to <u>not</u> make the customer feel embarrassed about needing help with finances.

Use of Tú

On the other hand, **public service announcements** try to establish solidarity and togetherness with local residents.

Ads directed toward **women, young people, students, families, and movie buffs** also employ *tú* as a way of showing informality.

Advertising directed toward **local consumers** generally uses $t\hat{u}$, again to show solidarity. (The idea is something like: "You are one of us." "You belong here.") Similarly, we find $t\hat{u}$ used in ads for **products for the home**, showing solidarity with those who live in the area, and in **ads for entertainment** (showing informality).

Examples from Newspapers

Fig. 1. Ad directed to international business executives uses *usted* (*su negocio*, *cuente con*, *le ofrecemos*, *necesita*, *infórmese*).



Fig. 2. Ad for hearing aids directed to elderly people (showing man with white hair) uses usted (si es usted; su carnet; obtendrá; para usted, que necesita; le realizamos; su audífono; Solicite).



Fig. 3. Ad directed to businesses for safety product, which could be used in geriatric centers for elderly people, uses *usted* (*Evite*, *Supere*, *Haga su pedido*).



Fig. 4. Ad for financial assistance uses *usted* (¿Tiene...?, ¡¡Llámenos!!) to avoid having the potential customer feel embarrassed.



Fig. 5. Another ad for financial assistance uses *usted* (*su disposición, le ayudará, sus problemas, si llama*).



Fig. 6. Another ad for financial assistance uses usted (Si tiene, propiedad suya, su familia, le damos, consulte).



Fig. 7. Yet another ad for financial assistance uses usted (Necesita, nadie se lo da, Tiene, su hipoteca, ¿Le van a embargar la casa?, ¡¡¡Llámenos!!!, su propiedad, le damos solución).



Fig. 8. Public service announcement for public transportation uses $t\acute{u}$ (<code-block> $\ifmmode_i\)$ \if </code>



Fig. 9. Ads directed toward young women use tú (Entra, tu ahorro), showing solidarity.



Fig. 10. Ads directed toward older women also use *tú* (*Ven, Elimina, Olvídate de tu edad*) to show solidarity and to try to make them feel younger.



Fig. 11. Ad directed toward young mothers uses tú (Tú siempre les cuidas a ellos. Y a ti, ¿Quién te cuida?, tu seguro, tu póliza, te cuida).



Fig. 12. Ad directed toward prospective students uses tú (Mejora y crece, Infórmate, te interesa, no pierdas, tu cualificación).



Fig 13. Ad for products for the home uses $t\acute{u}$ (tu $casa & t\acute{u}$). Such potential customers would be local residents. The photo shows a young couple.



Fig. 14. Ad directed toward local moviegoers (for a film on the 1981 Spanish coup attempt, which would be of interest mostly to Spaniards and to *madrileños* specifically) uses *tú* (*Gana con WB y Qué, manda un email*, and especially: ¿Dónde estabas tú el 23-F?).



Fig. 15. Ad for family-oriented entertainment uses $t\acute{u}$ (no te va a faltar, tu bebé, divertirte, Prepara tu fiesta, lo que necesitas, lo tienes, entra en ... y participa). This shows solidarity. In addition, children would be involved in this activity.

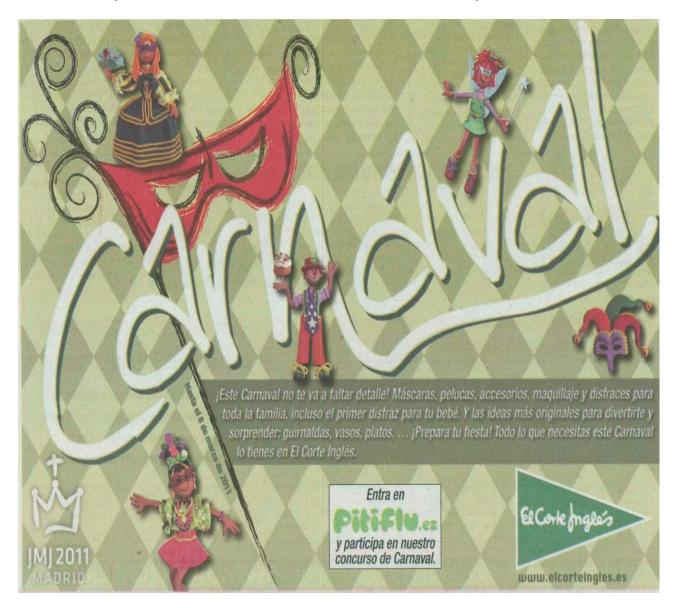


Fig. 16. Ad for apartments (some furnished and on the beach) starting at 70,000 €uses *tú* (*Esperabas tu momento*, *visítanos*). Note the young woman running on the beach, showing informal, fun-type of living.

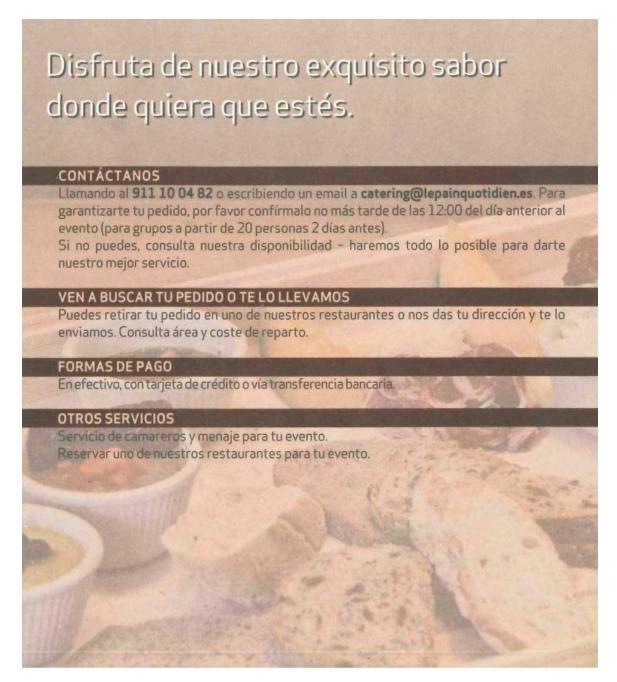


Fig. 17. In contrast, an ad for apartments starting at 195,000 €uses *usted (Visítelos)*, in order to show respect toward wealthier potential consumers.



Example from a promotional brochure

Fig. 18. Promotional literature directed toward local consumers (who would employ a catering service) use $t\acute{u}$ (Disfruta, que estés, contáctanos, garantizarte tu pedido, confírmalo, puedes, consulta, darte, ven, te lo llevamos, tu pedido, nos das tu dirección y te lo enviamos, tu evento).



Examples from Product Labeling and Instructions

Fig. 19. Colorful product label on front at top of Listerine bottle uses *tú* (*Limpia tu boca*).



However, the directions on the back of the Listerine label, and factory-supplied fold-up inserts with technical instructions, employ <u>infinitives</u>. Perhaps this is to <u>avoid</u> choosing an address form, because these instructions are directed to no one in particular. This is also a way of being somewhat more formal than using $t\hat{u}$.

Listerine instructions

- <u>Usar</u> dos veces al día.
- Apretar. Girar. (in the instructions for opening and closing)
- <u>Verter</u> 20 ml. en un vaso, <u>realizar</u> enjuagues alrededor de dientes y encías durante 30 segundos y después <u>escupir</u>.
- No consumir si al comprarlo el precinto está roto.
- No <u>diluir</u>, <u>tragar</u> o <u>beber</u> de la botella.
- <u>Mantener f</u>uera del alcance de los niños

Usted is used on a more direct and formal recommendation to the Listerine

consumer:

• <u>Le</u> recomendamos que <u>visite</u> regularmente a <u>su</u> dentista.

Examples from Forms and Surveys

Fig. 20. Hotel registration form uses *usted* to show formality in addressing clients (*sus datos, su alojamiento, su salida*).

Habit./Room	Pax	Nombre/Name		In			
				Out			
Empresa			Precio Habit. Room Rate		Desayuno: Breakfast:		
Pasaporte D.N.I.				Fecha de na		acim.	
alojamiento, de acuer rectificación y cancela	rdo a la l ción, envi es o valo:	ey Orgánica ando un esc res que no se	iyo responsable es Ho i de Protección de Dat rito a nuestra dirección ean entregados y decla	os de 15/1999 . El Hotel no re) tiene derecho de a esponde del efectivo,	cceso,	
El hotel tiene subscrit fuertes.	to un seg	guro contra	robo que cubre 1.500	Euros del valo	or depositado en las	Cajas	
Your data will be inclu services. According to t data sending a letter to or other valuables obje	he Organ o our add	ic Law 15/199 Iress. We can	of Hotel Gran Versalle 99 at any time, you may not accept responsabil and declared on our saf	access, rectify ty for money,	or eliminate your per iewels, personal comp	rsonal outers.	
The hotel has insurance in the safes.	e coverag	e against sta	olen articles, for an amo	ount of 1.500 E	uros of the value depo	osited	

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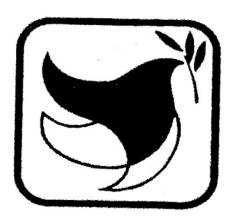
Covarrubias, 4 y 6 . 28010 Madrid - Spain Telf.: 91 447 5700 . Fax: 91 446 3987 e-mail: hgv@hotelgranversalles.es www.hotelgranversalles.es I.V.A. incluido. VAT included Horario Desayuno: de 7:00 a 10:00 horas. Breakfast Served from : 7:00 to 10:00 a.m. Desayuno Fin de Semana/Breakfast Weekend: 7:00 - 11:00h a.m.

Acepto las condiciones del contrato I'm acepting contract conditions	100
, š	
Eirma/Signature	

Gracias por entregar la llave el día de su salida. Thank you for giving the key back at check out time.

Fig. 21. Instructions to patients to fill out hospital survey uses *usted* to show respect (*su paso, su servicio, su opinión, rellene, deposítelo, su colaboración*).

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AL SERVICIO DE LA VIDA Y DE LA ESPERANZA

Deseamos que su paso por el Sanatorio San Francisco de Asís haya sido satisfactorio. Toda la organización y todos los medios del sanatorio están a su servicio.

Nuestro objetivo es mejorar continuamente la atención a los pacientes y a sus acompañantes, y para ello necesitamos conocer su opinión.

POR FAVOR RELLENE ESTE CUESTIONARIO Y DEPOSÍTELO EN LOS BUZONES DE CLIENTES SITUADOS EN LAS SALAS DE ESPERA

Gracias por su colaboración

Encuesta de satisfacción de pacientes URGENCIAS

Conclusions

Politeness dictates usage of *usted* in advertisements directed toward older and wealthier clients, toward business executives, and in ads for financial assistance, in order to show **respect.**

Usted is also used toward:

- Unknown consumers (such as the hospital survey)
- Toward hotel clients
- In more formal directives (such as to visit the dentist regularly).

Politeness also dictates usage of $t\hat{u}$ in advertisements directed toward women, young people, students, and families to show **confidence**, **togetherness** and **solidarity** toward local consumers and toward those of similar social status. $T\hat{u}$ is also used to make aging women feel younger.

Thus, we have seen that the concepts of **respect** and **politeness** are reflected in the forms used to address different consumers.

Of course, forms of respect and politeness do vary from one region to another. One must learn the norms, or have local counterparts assist with which address form would be most appropriate for that area.

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