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¡No manches, güey! Service encounters in a Hispanic American intercultural communication setting

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Abstract

This paper analyzes food service encounters of Hispanic service providers and Anglo-American and Hispanic customers in an intercultural communication setting. The paper addresses the question of whether or not Anglo-Americans and Hispanics take different stances during requests. The study used participant and non-participant observation of 350 naturally occurring interactions. Depending on the style of the interaction, two types of stancetaking were analyzed: transactional and friendly. The results show that transactional stances were the majority across both customer groups, as the interlocutors were mainly oriented to the transactional goals of the interaction. Friendly stances were more frequent from Hispanic customers and American females; however, the proportion of these customer groups was small as compared to the proportion of Anglo-American customers and American males in particular. The paper provides empirical evidence for positioning stancetaking as a crucial activity in intercultural communication settings.

Keywords: Request; Service encounter; Positioning stancetaking; Friendly stance; Transactional stance

1. Introduction

English-Spanish contact is one of the most prominent language contact situations in the US and has had a long history since colonial times (Lipski, 2010:556). While the links between language and identity in this context have been widely investigated (e.g. Hill, 1999; Bailey, 2001), only a few studies have looked at communicative interactions of Hispanic and American populations in the context of service encounters, either from an intercultural (Callahan, 2009) or a cross-cultural (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015) perspective.

A service encounter is defined here as the interaction between a service provider and a service seeker in commercial and non-commercial settings with the purpose of exchanging products or services (Gutek, 1999:605). Service encounters are pervasive in everyday life (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:1) and fundamental to the US economy (Gutek, 1999:603) as in many other countries. From a sociocultural perspective, service encounters between Hispanic and American populations are interesting case studies because participants may display different sociocultural models regarding expected ways of requesting. In addition, one is likely to observe different ethnic (Fought, 2006) and language identities (Torras and Gafaranga, 2002) at play in each interaction.

This paper investigated communicative interactions of Anglo-Americans and Hispanics when requesting a taco at a Mexican off-street taco stand in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Despite being in an American context, this taco stand has the...
ethos of the traditional Mexican taqueria ‘taco stand’ (Margolies, 2012:247, 261): a street vendor sells inexpensive food items, such as tacos and quesadillas that are quickly prepared at the customer’s request. In addition to these features, the Pittsburgh shop also lacks menu boards and food labels, so the transactions rely on customers’ previous knowledge and the interaction itself. Latin American music is also played loudly at times, using an old radio. Both Hispanics and Anglo-Americans are frequent customers and this leads to interethnic and bilingual interactions with the Hispanic service providers (henceforth taqueros).

Besides being a context of frequent interethnic interaction, the taco stand adds two elements that are relevant for the analysis. First, Hispanics are a minority in the city. Of 305,704 inhabitants in Pittsburgh, only 2.3% (7032 people) are Spanish speakers (Department of Commerce of the United States, 2012). Although country of origin is not reported in the census, most Hispanic customers appeared to be speakers of regional varieties of Mexican and Central American Spanish, as suggested by the dominance of words and expressions from Mexican Spanish.

Admittedly, there is variation among each customer group, but that variation was not the focus of this paper. Hispanics are a heterogeneous group (cf. Ramos Pellicia, 2014) and differences in requests across Spanish dialects have been documented (Placencia, 2005, 2008). However, it is their behavior as a group in contrast with Anglo customers that is highlighted instead of their internal differences. Similarly, there is also pragmatic variation among American English speakers (cf. Wolfram and Schilling, 2016, Ch. 10; Schneider, 2012:347). However, given the patterns of prototypical speech behavior in repetitive social situations such as service encounters (Schneider, 2012:346, 368; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1993:72), the accommodation to taqueros’ non-native English, and the fact that most of the Anglo-American customers were young college students, variation among Anglo customers was less likely to be observed.

Additionally, although the taco stand is a landmark for Hispanic customers, Anglo customers outnumbered them by a 2.7:1 ratio. These interethnic interactions provide crucial evidence for the role language plays in defining and shifting cultural boundaries between the groups (Fought, 2006:17–21; 174). As predicted by Carbaugh (1998:176) and Harré and van Langenhove (1998:2–3, 6), instances of positioning stance of each ethnic group-member are metapragmatically driven as unavoidable ideological actions during the transaction.

It is these particular instances of positioning stancetaking during the taco request interaction that were the focus of this paper. Section 2 introduces the background on requests and stances, along with previous research on service encounters. In sections 3 and 4, the methods and the results (both quantitative and qualitative) are presented. Finally, the findings are discussed in section 5.

2. Theoretical framework

Félix-Brasdefer (2015:4–5) considers service encounters to be a genre of its own. The descriptors of service encounters in commercial settings, especially in the food-retail setting such as the taco stand, can be synthesized in terms of an overall orientation toward the transaction goal, the usual anonymity of the participants, and the use of conventional ways of requesting. Given the focus on efficiency (Brown and Levinson, 1987:62, 69), service encounters thus entail no threat for the addressee’s image (Placencia, 2005:585), regardless of the directness of the request (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:152).

2.1. Requests as speech acts

The request speech act as analyzed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989:17–19) has three parts: (1) the head act or the request itself; (2) the alerter that calls the addressee’s attention; and 3) supportive moves that mitigate the force of the act. These devices are illustrated in (1), in which the head act is the core element. The greeting Hi works as an alerter warning the listener about the upcoming request. The request itself: Can I have one pork [taco]? is the head act. The moves please and thank you mitigate the force of the request and acknowledge the service provided. This example also illustrates conventionalized indirect routines for requests in American culture (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:94).

(1) Head act as core element

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alerter (Optional)</th>
<th>Head act</th>
<th>Moves (Optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hi…</td>
<td>…Can I have one pork [taco]…</td>
<td>…please? Thank you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These speech acts offer opportunities for sociolinguistic variation. In bilingual contexts, the speaker may rely on different routines and values as a function of sociocultural and linguistic differences. Positioning stances and linguistic
choices are ostensible ideologized actions observable during the interactions, as they may express values of linguistic identities and ethnic solidarity.

2.2. Language ideologies and positioning stancetaking

In this paper, language ideologies are understood as heterogeneous ideas, beliefs, or representations of the language (s) (Kroskrity, 2004:498). Although the speakers’ rationalization is an important factor in language ideologies (Silverstein, 1979:193), they are also implicitly associated to the ethnic groups of the speakers (Fought, 2006:21), their moral values (Irvine, 1989:9), and their social and discursive practices (Woolard, 1998:14, 1992:235). Crucially, the positions taken by the interlocutors in a given interaction are reflective of their underlying ideologies as members of their ethnic groups.

Positioning is the discursive process of negotiating the interlocutors’ position in discursive interactions (van Langenhove and Harré, 1998:14–15). It was initially proposed in constructionist approaches as an alternative to the more rigid concept of social roles. Stancetaking implies some assessment of the interaction and supposes the mutual connection of that assessment and the interlocutors’ positions (Jaffe, 2009:5). Specifically, positioning stancetaking means the position taken by someone with respect to the interlocutor, the utterances, or the ongoing interaction (Jaffe, 2009:3–4). Thus, positioning stancetaking acknowledges the interlocutors’ agency to assess the interaction, take positions accordingly, and negotiate these positions.

In taco shop requests, one can therefore expect Hispanic and American populations to negotiate different social and linguistic identities (Carbaugh, 1998; Tan and Moghaddam, 1998). At the same time, in service encounters the interaction is ritualized and this shapes the stances as interlocutors usually follow specific scripts (Jaffe, 2009:21). Therefore, individual departures from the scripts may become relevant when interlocutors do something else beyond the request.

This paper posits two positioning stances that may be taken during the request interaction, transactional stances and friendly stances. These labels are motivated in both the repertoire of stances proposed by Kiesling (2009:174) for deployment of personal styles and in the shifts of alignment from transactional –task-oriented– to relational talk –interpersonal-oriented– documented in service encounters (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Placencia, 2005, 2007, 2008; Placencia and Mancera, 2011; Ylänne-McEwen, 2004). A transactional stance is understood as the default or baseline condition of the request interaction. It is recognized when interlocutors do nothing else other than the transaction, usually, but not necessarily, following scripted ways of requesting in transactional talk (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:56). In the constructionist frame, a transactional stance would be a type of moral positioning in which the moral order is accepted (van Langenhove and Harré, 1998:21–22).

A friendly stance is understood as a departure from the script and the goals of the transaction, along with displays of friendliness toward the addressee. It includes pre- and post-request relational talk, which may spread through the whole interaction. These episodes of relational talk may be related to the immediate situation but are unnecessary for the transaction itself, such as compliments on the food or the service, general comments, and exchanges of public or personal domain (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:183–184). Thus, a friendly stance is a type of personal positioning (van Langenhove and Harré, 1998:21–22).

Although transactional and friendly stances are related to transactional and relational talk, they do not always coincide. While transactional and relational talk is identifiable in speech segments, transactional and friendly stances were treated as the resultant orientation of the interaction, mutually negotiated between the customer and the taquero. Therefore, specific features, such as language choice, irony, humor, address terms, and body language may key the interaction toward a friendly or a transactional stance (Jaffe, 2009:10).

In friendly stances, the participants have achieved mutual face-enhancement (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1987:61), whereas relational talk can be both face enhancing and face threatening. Thus, the presence of a relational talk episode is not a sufficient condition for a friendly stance, as the participants’ alignment is needed. For example, the taquero may not acknowledge a customer’s friendly attempts in relational talk, in which case the default transactional stance holds. Therefore, instances of participants’ (dis)alignment are crucial for a transactional or a friendly stance (Dubois, 2007:159–162; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:184). This mutually negotiated orientation of the interaction highlights the tension between cultural stereotypes, (un)expected behaviors, social roles, and subject positions (Davies and Harré, 1998:39–45). Moreover, in service encounters friendly stances are embedded in the transactional frame (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:183). Thus, taking a friendly stance does not preclude the moral order implied in the transaction.

The initiator of a given stance may be reflective of the moral order as it may express who must start the transaction and who is allowed to initiate a friendly exchange. Given the moral order of transactions in Western societies, in which the customer is profiled as always right, one would expect that taqueros reciprocate the customer’s positioning, as previous research has shown (Callahan, 2009:57).

1 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this feature of relational talk.

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2.3. Previous research in service encounters

The research on service encounters is extensive and covers cross-cultural (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:82–115), intra-cultural (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015:116–140) and interethnic cases (e.g. Bailey, 1997), as well as those involving shifts of alignment (Ylänne-McEwen, 2004). Félix-Brasdefer (2015) for example provides an exhaustive survey of more than eighty studies conducted from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. In reviewing these studies, I will focus only on those involving face-to-face service encounters in Spanish–English bilingual settings and Spanish monolingual settings. In particular, I prioritize studies conducted in small shops or other commercial settings that entail some informality for the encounter, as these most closely align with the Pittsburgh context.

Regarding English–Spanish bilingual contexts, Callahan (2009) studied service encounters in commercial settings in New York City. She found that workers mostly accommodate to the customer’s language choice (i.e. Spanish), with the exception of young female fieldworkers of Caucasian phenotype, who often received responses in English. In a series of cross-cultural and intra-cultural studies in delicatessens and open-air markets in Mexico and the US, Félix-Brasdefer (2015) found that Americans tended to use conventional indirect requests, whereas Mexicans tended to use imperative and elliptical requests in addition to more relational talk in informal settings.

In service encounters in Barcelona, Torras and Gafaranga (2002) found that the choice between Catalan, Spanish, and English was ideologically driven to display linguistic identities and construct social memberships. Shively and Cohen (2008) found that American students in study abroad programs in Spain improve their request performance with time. Shively (2013, 2011) also found episodes of relational talk and an overall pragmatic development of the students in the L2, including the decrease of indirectness and the shift toward direct strategies.

Regarding Spanish monolingual contexts, Placencia (2005, 2007, 2008) conducted a series of naturalistic studies of service encounters in corner stores, hair salons, and bars (Placencia and Mancera, 2011) in different regions of the Hispanic world. In addition to differences in the interactions across regions, Placencia found pervasive relational talk between hairdressers and customers in the hair salons in Quito (Ecuador) and between bartenders and customers in the bars (Seville, Spain). These results were especially robust in opening and closing sequences or when the customers and the service providers appeared to have a long history of previous encounters.

Similarly, Ruzickova (2007) investigated service encounters in Cuba and found that speakers usually oriented to positive politeness strategies, camaraderie, and common membership through the use of linguistic resources, such as address and endearment terms. Overall, these studies suggest that informal contexts, such as corner stores, salons, bars, pizza stands, and small open-air markets are favorable for relational talk. Notwithstanding, knowledge of request performance of Spanish speakers in intercultural settings is still limited. More research based on naturalistic data is needed in accounting for a variety of intercultural and Spanish–English contact situations. These studies exemplify this kind of research and suggest the need to incorporate processes of meaning negotiation in addition to social variables such as age and gender.

With this in mind, this paper analyzes the transactional and friendly positioning stances in communicative interactions between *taqueros* and Hispanic and Anglo-American customers. Furthermore, the paper compares the linguistic and non-linguistic ostensible resources used by Anglos and Hispanics in taking and negotiating the stance. The research questions that guided the present study were as follows:

1. What are the defining features of both friendly and transactional stances taken by Hispanic and Anglo-American customers?
2. What are the patterns of difference across Hispanic and Anglo-American customers when taking a friendly vs. a transactional stance?

3. Methods

I conducted a 1-week ethnographic pilot study of request interactions at the site\(^2\) in the Spring 2014. Forty-three interactions, which are not reported in this paper, were observed on a daily basis. The results of this pilot study were used to frame the main study reported in this paper. For example, the main study was conducted by me-the primary researcher (Hispanic)- and one linguistically trained research assistant (American) using the same methods of the pilot study. Together the researchers enriched the data collection with different perspectives and discussed patterns (e.g. gestures, connotative meanings), otherwise hardly salient for one researcher representing one ethnic group. This paper used a mixed model with a quantitative component for measurement of variables and a qualitative component for collection and interpretation of the data.

\(^2\) The *taqueros* and the business-owner were aware of that the observations were being conducted.
3.1. The ethnography

Participant observation was the primary ethnographic technique (Duranti, 1997). This was augmented by the inclusion of multiple sources of information, such as verbal and non-verbal language helping the interpretation of the data (Patton, 2002). Moreover, the inclusion of two observers was important to improve the interpretations of the interactions and refine emic and etic perspectives (Duranti, 1997:68, 172), aiming at intersubjectivity (Sidnell, 2014:368).

Within this ethnographic frame, request interactions were observed during three periods: Summer and Fall 2014, and Spring 2015 (18 weeks total). Observations were restricted to one hour during the lunch period (Monday through Saturday³). The researchers individually observed request interactions of three Hispanic male taqueros (2 Mexicans, 1 Guatemalan) and Hispanic (16 females, 72 males) and Anglo-American (55 females, 183 males) customers. Depending on customer flow, each visit yielded four to ten observed interactions. Each researcher visited the taco-store 25 times, yielding 350 interactions as shown in Table 1.

After presenting themselves as customers, the researchers observed interactions of the taqueros with other customers. During the observation, predesigned forms were completed (see Appendix) with information about the estimated physical appearance of the customer (ethnic group, gender, and age range) and the linguistic repertoire displayed during the interaction (main language choice, code-switching instances, loanwords, accent). Besides these estimations, efforts were made to register the exact words said by both the customer and the taquero, along with complementary notes related to body language, tone, attitudes, and familiarity or distance perceived between the interlocutors. No new observation was conducted until having registered the maximum amount of relevant information of each interaction.

3.2. Data analysis

The analysis was oriented to identify the overall stancetaking of each request interaction either as friendly or transactional. Each stance was an interpretative decision taken in the field, based on the interlocutors’ attitudes, the linguistic and non-verbal resources, the observation of alignment, the formality level, and the general style perceived, as summarized in Table 2. These distinctive categories are based on the observations from the pilot study and on Trosborg’s (1995:187–221) description of “the communicative act of requesting.”

With these data, Hispanics and Anglos were contrasted in terms of the stances taken and customers’ variables. Recall that since the data consist of observations of public behaviors, customers were not interviewed and, therefore, their

³ Some observations were not possible due to weather conditions or the absence of customers.

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gender, age range, and ethnic affiliation were impressionistically estimated. Since the aim of the study was to look at the interaction of Hispanic and Caucasian Anglo-American customers, the observations of other ethnic groups, such as African, Asian, and Jewish Americans (Gregg et al., 2001:602), were excluded. Given that Hispanic and Caucasian stereotypical phenotypes are not unique patterns, other features were also taken into account when judging ethnic affiliation, such as main language spoken, regional accent, and native and foreign speech. The content of the exchange occasionally helped to disclose the customers’ ethnic group. Where the researchers had serious hesitations about the ethnic group of any customer observed, those data were excluded from the analysis.

In terms of methodological limitations, although the inclusion of two observers helped the triangulation of the data, it might be that one of the observers was more skilled at capturing the relevant cues of the interactions. Specifically, the Hispanic observer had more training, research experience, had previously conducted the pilot study, and in fact he also made a larger amount of observations than the American observer. Further, prior to the research project, he was a recurrent customer of the taco shop. As will be seen in section 4, possible researcher effects were factored into the analysis. Likewise, capturing all sources of information (e.g., speech, body language) was challenging. Since the researchers were mostly focused on the participants’ utterances, they might have missed some non-verbal cues. In the field, the researchers gained a better view of the customers, who were in a clearer visual field than taqueros. At the same time, these are typical challenges for observational studies if the use of recording devices is not possible, as in the present study. The research strategies used helped to counterbalance these challenges.

### 4. Results

Transactional stances were the most frequent (260/350, 74.3%) across all customer groups as displayed in Table 3 and Fig. 1. There was greater proportion of friendly stances from Hispanic customers (43/88, 48.9%) than from Anglo-American customers (46/238, 19.3%). Other ethnic groups, such as Asian, Arabic, and African American, were decidedly oriented toward the transactional stance (23/24, 95.8%). For reasons noted above these latter groups were excluded from further analyses, yielding a total of 326 observations of Hispanic and Anglo-American customers’ interactions.

#### 4.1. Taking a stance among Hispanics and Anglo-Americans

The first research question asks for the defining features of friendly and transactional stances among Hispanic and Anglo-American customers. In order to answer the question, the linguistic and communicative resources used to take those stances were qualitatively examined, given that language is often a key factor for the expression of ethnicity in interethnic communication (Fought, 2006:20–21, 174). Assuming that individuals voice collective ideologies (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994:57), this analysis pursues a contextual understanding of the daily interactions between

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4 For estimations of ethnic affiliation, the stereotypical Hispanic and Caucasian phenotypes were assumed.
Hispanic and Anglo populations in the taco stand. Table 4 summarizes the contrast between these customer groups.

### 4.1.1. Taking a friendly stance

The strategies followed by both Hispanic and Anglo-American customers in friendly positioning suggest different representations of friendly interactions, even though there are similarities. Friendly positioning among Hispanic customers is characterized by investments to drive the interaction toward an informal personal talk, as shown in example 2. In friendly stances, the transaction was an occasion for Hispanic customers and *taqueros* to exchange personal information, share conversations of public (e.g., the weather) and private domain (e.g., personal income, migration status), and use of body language to convey distance and personal space.

#### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendly Stances</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Anglo-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How are you inquiries (e.g., ¿Cómo estás? 'How are you?')</td>
<td>How are you inquiries (e.g., How are you?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mocking and ironic speech</td>
<td>Informal expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diminutives (Nominal or adjectival stem + -ito/a) and downgraders (un poco 'a little')</td>
<td>(e.g., What's up?, man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronominal address terms (tú-teo)</td>
<td>Conversations of public domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nominal address terms (e.g., camarada 'buddy', cabrón 'dude', chavo 'lad', reina 'honey')</td>
<td>(e.g., the weather)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversations of public (e.g., the weather) and private domain (e.g., personal income, migration status)</td>
<td>Thank you and good wishing expressions (e.g., have a good one!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional body language (e.g., laughter)</td>
<td>Spanish choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you and good wishing expressions (e.g., que le vaya bien 'have a good one')</td>
<td>Code-switching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transactional Stances</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Anglo-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No investment in personal exchange</td>
<td>No investment in personal exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional greetings (e.g., Buenas 'hi') or no greetings</td>
<td>Conventional greetings (e.g., hi) or no greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct request: déme tres tacos de lomo! 'give me three ribeye tacos!'</td>
<td>Conventional indirect request: (e.g., Can I have two chicken?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pronominal address terms (Usted)</td>
<td>Direct request: (e.g., I want to have one pork!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No relational talk beyond the request</td>
<td>No relational talk beyond the request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence of emotional body language</td>
<td>Absence of emotional body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use of body language to convey distance and personal space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Stancetaking across the presumed ethnic affiliation of the customers.
opinions about topics unrelated to the transaction, key the interaction in a joking, ironic, or mocking style, shift to some familiar or informal talk, or enhance the social cohesion. These functions are consistent with Callahan’s findings on the use of Spanish as the in-group language in service encounters to express solidarity, personal rapport, and common ethnic membership 

(2) Obs#142, Hispanic, Male > 30, Friendly [excerpt]

C:  Eh, ¿no tiene lomo?
T:  ‘Mmm, don’t you have ribeye?’
C:  ‘Just in a moment, we will make it, in about half an hour’
T:  ‘What a hell, half an hour!’
C:  ‘Just kidding! In about 5 minutes’
T:  ‘How do you want it: raw, burned, cooked?’ [irony]
C:  ‘Pero no en media hora. ¡No manches, güey, que ahorita me voy!’
T:  ‘Just in a moment, when the counter is warmed’

Friendly stances between taqueros and Anglo-American customers are characterized by similar strategies to those of Hispanic customers. However, the level of engagement in the interaction was lower. Friendly stances were usually placed in the pre-request talk or within the request, as in example (3). Spanish choice and code-switching also helped the friendly stance. In these cases, Spanish appears as a commonality between Hispanic taqueros and American speakers of Spanish. Bilingual choices of American customers express bilingual identities (Fought, 2006:22) possibly targeting the potential rewards of speaking Spanish: a friendlier treatment, some acknowledgment of language skills, and the possibility to practice Spanish.

(3) Obs #108, Anglo-American, Male < 30, Friendly [excerpt]

T:  ‘Hey!’
C:  ‘What’s up!’
T:  ‘¿Cuántos?’
C:  ‘Dos.’
T:  ‘¿Pastor y pollo?’
C:  ‘Fajita mix and chicken?’
T:  ‘Si […] para llevar’
C:  ‘Yes, to go’
T:  ‘Did you study yesterday?’
C:  ‘Yeah, a little bit, I go to school every day.’
T:  ‘The taquero is preparing the order’
C:  ‘Gracias!’
T:  ‘Thank you!’

4.1.2. Taking a transactional stance

In transactional stances, there was no relational talk, no emotional body language, and no personal engagement. The strategies for setting up a transactional stance were similar for both Hispanic and Anglo customers, although there were
some differences in the linguistic resources used. Anglo-American customers used conventional ways of requesting in transactional stances, as shown in example (4). The interlocutors appeared to fill predictable templates with appropriate information: Hi - Can I have __X__, (please)? – thank you; Hi - Give me __X__. - Thank you! Sometimes, these interactions were reduced to the minimum requirements of the transaction: saying the order and receiving it. Interactions in transactional style were usually quick or had long periods of no interaction while the taquero was preparing the order. Transactional stances also appeared in cases of displacement in language choice, favoring English as the “default language” (Callahan, 2009). Some body language was used to convey the transactional style at times, which is consistent with previous research showing that non-verbal behavior is also constrained by the interpersonal tasks at hand (Tickle-Degnen, 2006:391).

(4) Obs #53, Anglo-American, Male < 30, Transactional
T: Hi
C: Can I ask what we have today?
T: Chicken, BBQ, Carnitas, Pork
C: Can I have one chicken and a pork?
T: Yeah! [customer is provided with the order]
C: Thank you!
T: You’re welcome!

Strategies to take a transactional stance among Hispanic customers were similar to those of Anglo-American customers. Hispanic requests tended to be more direct and less provided with greetings. The conventional ways of requesting included affirmative requests, such as Me da un taco de asada, por favor “You give me one roasted [beef] taco, please” and imperative requests, such as dame uno de alambre, por favor “Give me one alambre [taco], please!” as in example (5). Yes/no questions, such as ¿tiene de carnitas?” “do you have carnitas?”, were also noticed. These results are consistent with Félix-Brasdefer’s (2015:93) findings regarding the salience of imperatives and assertions in Mexican requests. Likewise, the pronoun usted and the softener por favor ‘please’ provided the exchange with a formal tone to convey distance and deference, which is consistent with Schwenter’s (1993:137) findings on the dominance of usted for exchanges with strangers in Mexican Spanish. There were no informal address terms, and no informal expressions. Moreover, body language was reduced to eye contact when doing the transaction.

(5) Obs #100, Hispanic, Male > 30, Transactional
C: [Usted] Me da, un taco de asada, por favor. ¿Tiene de carnitas?
T: No, no tenemos carnitas. Tenemos chorizo, alambre, pollo.
’No, we don’t have carnitas. We have Mexican sausage, alambre, chicken’.
C: Deme uno de alambre, por favor.
’Give me one alambre [taco], please!’
T: the customer receives the order and leaves

4.2. The patterns of difference between Hispanic and Anglo-American customers

In order to address the second research question, a logistic regression model was performed using the R-brul program (Johnson, 2009). Fig. 2 summarizes the variables included in the model: social (e.g. customer’s gender) situational (e.g. observer), interactional (e.g. body language), and linguistic variables (e.g. main language used). Tables 5 and 6 summarize the output from R-brul. Table 5 lists factors that were significant only for Anglo-Americans, such as Customer’s gender, and linguistic variables such as Main Language and Bilingual Choices, which had little variation for Hispanic customers. The header of the table shows basic statistical information of the model, such as input (a probability measure from 0 to 1), total N (the total number of observations in the model), and deviance (a measure of the difference between the actual data and the statistical model).

The following rows on the body of the table display variables in boldface and the levels of each variable in normal face. The three columns on the body of the table display the specific statistical information for each variable level. The column labeled N shows the number of observations in each variable level. The sum of all observations within each variable must match the total N on the header. The second column (% Friendly) shows the proportion of friendly interactions in each variable level, which is calculated using the formula on the top of the table (Friendly/(friendly + transactional)). For example, 40% of the American interactions that included code-switching were friendly (12/30 = .4). The last column lists the Factor Weights (FW), which are calculated across all levels of each variable. For example, Accent (which means an American accent while speaking Spanish) has the largest FW (.78) given that the largest proportion of friendly stances
4.2.1. Stancetaking among Hispanics and Anglos and the observer’s paradox

As shown in Table 6, the presumed ethnic group of the customer significantly relates to the resulting stance taken during the interaction (p < .001). Indeed, most of the Anglo-American customers (192/238, 80.6%) were oriented to a transactional stance. Hispanic customers displayed an even distribution of transactional (45/88, 51.1%) and friendly stances (43/88, 48.9%), yielding a larger FW (.666) for friendly stances than Anglo-Americans.

When looking for differences between Hispanic and Anglo customers, the data are split differently for both researchers. In general, the Hispanic researcher perceived more friendly stances (80/255, 31.4%) than the American research assistant (9/71, 12.7%). Fig. 3 depicts the split of the data for both observers by ethnic groups across age groups. The figure displays weighted means from 0 to 1 (the Y-axis) for each observer (the blue and pink lines) across both ethnic groups (the X-axis). The left panel displays the patterns for customers older than 30 and the right panel for those younger than 30. Higher means favor friendly stances while the lines joining those means represent the differences in the observations of each observer across ethnic groups. The larger the slope the larger the difference between the observations of friendliness from each ethnic group; a flat line thus would show no difference between one group and the other. The circles, on the other hand,
represent the number of observations in each cell: the wider the circle the larger the number of observations. These circles were scaled at 1 to make them more visible for the reader.

Overall, Fig. 3 shows opposite patterns for both observers in the Hispanic customer group, so that they perceived more friendliness from Hispanic customers of their same age range. These opposite patterns relate to the observer paradox, understood not only as the effects of observers on subjects’ responses (Labov, 1972:207–216), but also as the dependence of ethnographic data on the observer. While both researchers followed the same criteria to decide the stance

Table 5
Significant factors for Anglo-Americans only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Friendly/(friendly + transactional)]</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% Friendly</th>
<th>FW</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviance</td>
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Bilingual choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p &lt; .001*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Code-switching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loanwords</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Customer’s gender

<table>
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<tr>
<th>p = .026*</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main language

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<tr>
<th>p = .038*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
Factors that vary with ethnic group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Friendly/(friendly + transactional)]</th>
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<th>% Friendly</th>
<th>FW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Input</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviance</td>
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</table>

Body language

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<tr>
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Stancetaking onset

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pre- or post-request</td>
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<td>Request</td>
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</table>

Ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p &lt; .001*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Anglo-American</td>
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</table>

Observer

<table>
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<th>p = .005*</th>
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<td>Research assistant</td>
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Taquero

<table>
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<tr>
<td>The Tall one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Old one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a The original levels were collapsed as some vs. none, due to low tokens in some cells.

b Pre- and post-request were collapsed due to low tokens of post-request in transactional stances.

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taken in each case and observed different interactions, the consistent patterns in Fig. 3 suggest that the divergent perceptions are arguably due to ethnic and age differences of both the customers and observers.

Customer’s age was a significant factor ($p = .027$) as customers older than 30 yielded a larger weight for friendly stances, but this factor did not vary with customers’ ethnic groups. This result is partially explained by the fact that most of the Hispanic customers were older than 30 (64/88, 72.7%), whereas most of the Anglo-American customers (174/238, 73.1%) were younger than 30.

Examples 6a and 6b contrast a friendly stance of a Hispanic customer older than 30 and a transactional stance of an American customer younger than 30. In 6a, the customer displays solidarity toward the taquero by commenting on his work. They aligned in the friendly stance by making hyperbolic comments about the taquero’s work. In 6b, the interlocutors favor the transactional stance by following conventional scripts for requesting.

(6a) Obs #58, Hispanic, Male > 30, Friendly:
C: Me da cuatro taquitos de lomo […]
‘You give me four ribeye tacos’
T: ¿Para aquí o para llevar?
‘For here or to go’
C: Para aquí
‘For here’ [other details are discussed]
T: Necesito otro tiempo extra
‘I need some extra time’
C: Se te llenó esto, necesitas otra planta
‘This became crowded, you need another plant’
T: Y otras manos
‘And more hands’ [conversation continues on the same theme, including hyperbolic and ironic comments]

(6b) Obs #150, Anglo-American, Male < 30, Transactional:
C: Can I have one chicken?
T: For here or to go?
C: To go, please!
[customer is later provided with the order]
C: Thank you!

On the other hand, customer’s gender was a significant factor ($p = .026$) only for Anglo-American customers, with females more inclined to take friendly stances (17/55, 30.9%) than males (29/183, 15.8%). Example 7a shows an
interaction of an American female customer, which contrasts with the interactions of American males in examples 7b and 7c. In example 7a, there were friendly displays of the female customer who opens the interaction with an informal Spanish greeting and expresses concern about the taquero’s injury. The taquero also provides cooperative responses in greetings, how-are you enquiries, and customer’s questions, sometimes nested with subtle flirtatious speech. On the other hand, example 7b suggests that taqueros do not contribute to the same extent with American male customers in friendly stances. Some possible friendly cues, such as informal greetings, displayed by the customer were not acknowledged. The reverse is also true, as in example 7c, in which the taquero unsuccessfully tries to frame the interaction in a friendly stance.

(7a) Obs #138, Anglo-American, Female < 30, Friendly:
C: Hola ‘hi’
T: Hi, how are you doing?
C: I am good, how are you?
T: Would you want a taco?
C: I think I want to go... This is smaller kind of beef?
T: Yes, it is kind of beef
C: I want to go with one of these.
T: You can pay inside and bring the ticket!
C: ¡Gracias!
‘Thank you’
[Some additions to the order are discussed later]
C: Did you burn with that?
T: Yes, when we move, it happens.
C: Does it hurt? [conversation continues on this and other topics]

(7b) Obs #187, Anglo-American, Male < 30, Transactional:
T: Hola ‘hi’
C: How are you, man?
[The taquero is distracted with some pigeons on the street and does not acknowledge the question]
T: How many?
C: One of these and one of these
[Customer is provided with the order]
C: Thanks!
[Customer smiles when thanking and leaving; no answer is provided by the taquero]

(7c) Obs #122, Anglo-American, Male > 30, Transactional:
T: Hi, how are you doing?
[Customer gestures two tacos with his fingers without speaking]
C: Two?
T: Two?
[Customer nods and takes some distance from the stand while the order is prepared]
[Some long time passes and the customer is still waiting for the order]
C: How long should I wait?
T: What would you like?
C: Chicken
T: Chicken?
C: Yes, sir

4.2.2. The patterns of communicative interaction and stancetaking
Some of the most significant values that made a difference in friendly and transactional stances were observed in the specific ways in which the interlocutors interacted. For the whole population, there was a significant effect of the interaction initiator (p = .008), as customers set friendly stances (62/89, 69.7%) significantly more than taqueros (27/89, 31.3%). There was a significant effect of customer’s body language (p < .001) as friendly stances usually included some sort of emotional body language (83/89, 93.3%).

There was also a significant interaction between customer’s body language and ethnic affiliation, indicating that the distribution of customer’s body language was not the same across the ethnic groups. Thus, a key way in which customers index friendly and transactional stances was through distinct body language with each customer group employing different body language strategies. Table 7 displays the distribution of customer’s body language in Hispanic (left panel)
and Anglo customers (right panel). In both customer groups, friendly stances involved some sort of body language, such as eye contact, smiles, laughter, movements, and proxemics. However, the proportion of body language for friendly stances from the Hispanic group (89.4%) is double the proportion from the Anglo-American group (44.1%).

Fig. 4 depicts Hispanic customers displaying some body language to convey a friendly stance, which included eye contact, laughter, and proxemics. For example, some Hispanic customers moved to one side of the taco stand, reaching a closer position to the taquero while chatting. This is consistent with the function of body language to achieve personal rapport (Tickle-Degnen, 2006:383). For Anglo-American customers, the figure shows lower weighted means of body language for friendly stances as they also displayed body language to convey transactional stances, for example breaking eye contact after placing the order, taking some distance from the taco stand, and using hand gestures to point to the requested meat or the number of tacos desired.

Overall, body language was related to the management of personal space, which appeared to be larger among Anglo-Americans. Example 8a illustrates a friendly interaction of a Hispanic customer, with different forms of body language that helped the friendly stance. Example 8b, on the other hand, shows a transactional interaction of an American customer, in which body language helped the transactional stance. Both examples illustrate interactions initiated by customers and led by them toward a particular stance.

(8a) Obs #287, Hispanic, Male < 30, Friendly [omitted portion]:

C: ¿Me da uno de carnitas y dos de asada?

‘Can you give me one carnitas and two beef?’

[Customer smiles, and reaches closer physical proximity to the taquero by moving from behind to the side of the taco stand]
Besides interlocutors’ performance, the presence of relational talk before (pre-request) and after the request (post-request) also favored friendly stances. Fig. 5 displays the onset of positioning stances for both customer groups. The figure shows higher weighted means for pre- and post-request onsets as compared to the request alone. In both customer groups, there were large proportions of stances negotiated as friendly in the pre-request (Hispanic: 15/21, 71.4%; Anglo-Americans: 24/41, 58.5%) and post-request (Hispanics: 10/10, 100%; Anglo-Americans: 9/10, 90%). This suggests that the pre-request and post-request were suitable places to negotiate a friendly stance across both customer groups, even though interactions with pre-request (142/326, 43.6%) and post-request (20/326, 6.1%) were not the most common, as compared to those with only the request (164/326, 50.3%). This confirms earlier findings of Félix-Brasdefer (2015), Placencia (2005, 2007, 2008), and Placencia and Mancera (2011) that relational talk favors a shift from a transactional to an interpersonal frame, usually in opening and closing sequences.

Example 9a shows a friendly stance of an Anglo-American customer initiated as so in the pre-request, example 9b illustrates a friendly stance of a Hispanic customer with the stancetaking onset on the post-request, and example 9c displays a transactional interaction with an Anglo-American customer without pre- and post-request. As shown in example 9a, the customer opens the interaction greeting and waits for a response, which is acknowledged by the taquero, who reciprocally greets the customer and asks her how she is. Similarly, in 9b the interlocutor’s joke about the advantages of working as a taquero helps the friendly stance. On the other hand, 9c illustrates a plain request that includes only the minimum talk, such as the head act and payment.

(9a) Obs #109, Anglo-American, Female < 30, Friendly [Friendly onset on pre-request portion]

C: Hola
T: Hola, ¿cómo estás?
   ‘Hi, how are you?’

(9b) Obs #77, Hispanic, Male > 30, Friendly [Friendly onset on post-request portion]

T: Lo bueno de trabajar aquí es que entretiene la vista
   ‘The good part of working here is that you enjoy the sight [looking at passing young girls]’
C: Yo no sabía de todo eso que pasa por aquí
   ‘I didn’t know about such a thing that happens here [pretty girls crossing the street]’

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(9c) Obs #61, Anglo-American, Male > 30, Transactional [Request alone, no pre- or post-request]
T: How many?
C: Just two, carnitas and lomo to go.
T: All right, you pay inside but bring back the ticket for me.

4.2.3. Linguistic variables
Linguistic variables related to stancetaking were examined only among Anglos since they offered no variation among Hispanics. Bilingual choices (i.e. code-switching and accent) \((p < .001)\) and Spanish interactions \((p = .038)\) favored friendly stances \((11/33, 33.3\%)\) more than English \((35/205, 17\%)\). Indeed, Fig. 6 shows higher weighted means of bilingual responses than monolingual responses. Thus, American customers who spoke English and Spanish were more likely to trigger friendly stances than those who only spoke English. In brief, customers’ Spanish knowledge and their willingness to display their linguistic skills are likely to have had an effect on this result.

Example 10a illustrates a friendly interaction of an Anglo-American customer who suddenly code-switches to Spanish. The use of Spanish triggered metalinguistic comments from the \textit{taquero} and seems to have helped the friendly stance. Example 10b, on the other hand, shows a transactional interaction with loanwords, which were very common and did not help friendly stances.

(10a) Obs #120, Anglo-American, Female < 30, Friendly [portion omitted]
C: Can I have the chorizo y pollo? Gracias
T: Habla español muy bien
C: Hace mucho pero estudié español por doce años [smiles and laughter]

(10b) Obs #124, Anglo-American, Male > 30, Transactional [portion omitted]
C: Any \textit{lengua}? We don’t have any \textit{lengua}? [\textit{lengua} ‘tongue’]
T: Only in the morning but not now
C: So, give me one carnitas and two for him.

5. Discussion
The results from this paper relate to both the demographics of Pittsburgh and the processes of meaning negotiation in communicative interactions. Anglo-American customers, who yielded most of the transactional stances, were the
majority, whereas Hispanic customers, who yielded a larger proportion of friendly stances, were a minority. Compared to New York City (Callahan, 2009), Hispanic people are fewer and more scattered in Pittsburgh (Morgenstern, 2009:6–7). Within this minority, friendly stances enhance social cohesion and speaking Spanish appears to be an ideological index of ethnicity (Fought, 2006:174).

These findings give evidence for positioning stancetaking as a crucial activity in intercultural communication. Namely, language selection worked as a categorization device to display ethnic bounds (Kroskrity, 2004:509) and express linguistic identities (Torras and Gafaranga, 2002). In particular, the commonality in the language mostly resulted in a differential treatment with respect to non-Spanish speakers, as Spanish favored friendly stances and enabled more alignment for Hispanic customers. Consistently with Callahan’s (2009:20) findings in New York, Spanish appears to be ideologically associated to solidarity, friendship, and personal rapport in the taco stand, while English is ideologically linked to public behavior and work.

On the other hand, American customers who displayed some skills in Spanish were more likely to trigger friendly stances than those who spoke only English. Thus, Spanish-speaking Americans seem to be sensitive to the differential treatment and actively involved in the negotiation of the linguistic commonality. The interactions observed suggest that, by displaying a bilingual identity, American customers gained credit as Spanish speakers and received sympathetic responses from Hispanic taqueros, which can be one of the ideological benefits of code-switching in bilingual settings (Fought, 2006:22).

Rather than individual positions, this paper contributes to the understanding of positioning stancetaking as a mutual negotiation between interlocutors. Hispanics were more likely to converse beyond the request, touch upon personal topics, mock each other, and joke about the surrounding things/people/events, which triggered friendly stances. This pattern is in line with Brasdefer’s (2015) and Placencia and Mancera (2011), who showed that informal settings, such as small open-air markets and bars in Mexico and Spain, respectively, favor relational talk. Anglo-Americans, on the other hand, were more transactionally oriented. Occasionally, Anglos were actively disposed to converse beyond the request, talk about topics of public domain and, sometimes, choose or switch to Spanish, which also triggered friendly stances.

Overall, these findings show a deployment of distinct repertoires of stances for personal style, as suggested by Kiesling (2009:174). Both Hispanic and Anglo-American customers displayed different repertoires of transactional and friendly stances, which coincided in the core but differed in details. For example, taking some distance from the interlocutor may convey personal space for Americans, but anger for Hispanics. These results depict Kiesling’s (2009) stance repertoire as a productive construct, which is expandable to interactions of strangers with ties limited to vicinity, ethnicity, language, and/or the transaction itself as a shared interactional goal. These divergent tendencies tie to different ideologies and knowledge schemes (Davies and Harré, 1998:34–35).

In addition to these insights of intercultural understanding, the paper provides naturalistic evidence of stancetaking in service encounters in English–Spanish contact settings. These findings complement previous work on requests in English–Spanish bilingual contexts, Spanish monolingual contexts, and in cross-cultural and intra-cultural comparisons.

6. Conclusion

Using observational data, this paper compared request interactions of Hispanic and Anglo-American customers with Hispanic taqueros in a Latino off-street taco stand. The paper provides empirical naturalistic evidence for positioning stancetaking in an intercultural communication setting. The findings for the first research question showed that friendly and transactional stances were different for Hispanic and Anglo customers, relying on distinct linguistic and nonverbal behaviors. Results for the second research question showed that variation on friendly and transactional stances depended on social variables, the communicative interaction itself, and linguistic variables, even though not all variables hold for both Hispanic and Anglo-American groups. Overall, Hispanic ethnic affiliation of the customer and Spanish language choice were more likely to result in a friendly stance.

Acknowledgements

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### Appendix. Observation sheet

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### References


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