The interplay of quantitative and qualitative methods in migration linguistics
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Language contact and variation in migration contexts has been studied systematically in various fields, but only recently been acknowledged as a discipline in its own right. Bringing together studies of multilingualism and second language acquisition with those of bidialectalism, dialect leveling and urbanization, migration linguistics begins to overcome the (European) tendency to consider states as nation states with one dominant ethnic group and a single (standard) language, a tendency that has long hindered the study of territorial mobility and internal migration.

Linguists have until recently focused on phonetic or morphological variables since they are easier to quantify. However, many differences on the pragmatic level are more important to migrants' everyday communication, as anyone moving from one corner of a speech community to another (e.g. from Hamburg to Vienna, or from Bologna to Naples) can attest. To study differences in levels of politeness, speech acts like formulation requests, orders etc., linguists will need to use qualitative methods on a much broader scale than has been done so far. Based on data from a field study in Chile I would like to show how our understanding of language variation can profit from the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods.