

NOT SO IMPERSONAL: INTENTIONALITY IN THE USE OF PRONOUN *UNO* IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This paper combines quantitative and qualitative analyses in a corpus-based study of how and for what purposes politicians, in the context of the Spanish Parliament, use the impersonal pronoun *uno* 'one'. I begin by contrasting how *uno* is used in parliamentary debate versus non-political language. After reviewing traditional definitions of the semantic range and general behavior of this pronoun, I argue that a more accurate account than the one provided by standard grammars is needed for us to better understand how the peculiar characteristics of a parliament affect intentionality in the use of impersonal pronouns. In particular, it is argued that *uno* is utilized by politicians to serve principally two purposes: 1) avoidance of bluntness - a means of preserving professional etiquette, and 2) avoidance of self-praise - demonstrative of humility. Both purposes serve the larger objective of preserving professional face.

Keywords: Discourse pragmatics; Parliamentary talk; Deixis; Corpus linguistics.

1. Introduction

The pragmatic aspects of verbal interaction in professional politics have been widely studied (Bull 2003; Carter & McCarthy 2002; Chilton 2001, 2004; Fairclough 2000; Gamson 1992; Harris 1991; Tolmach-Lakoff 1990). However, in the long-standing tradition of the study of political language, indirectness as a verbal strategy has not received sufficient attention. Of the authors who have addressed this issue, Obeng, focusing on Ghanaian political discourse, characterizes indirectness as "a communicational strategy in which interactants abstain from directness in order to obviate crises or in order to communicate "difficulty", and thus make their utterances consistent with face and politeness" (1997: 42). For Obeng, indirectness derives from the violation or flouting of some of Grice's Conversational Maxims (1975). These maxims outline the general principles governing successful communication, and share the trait of collaboration. It is well known that Grice's hypothesis is intended to be seen as an approximation of the underlying principles of human communication. People do, purposely or unintentionally, hide facts, lie, and provide too many details or too little information.

Obeng's assertion directly contradicts, consequently, the general purpose of a parliament, namely, the collaborative effort of all political forces toward the peaceful resolution of a nation's issues. In addition, Obeng suggests that, through indirection, politicians "avoid confrontation in order to protect and further their careers" (1997: 50),

and that this strategy can be included in a larger purpose of saving face (see Brown & Levinson's (1987) work on politeness theory).

Indirectness may be conveyed through innuendos, metaphors or elision. In the particular context of our focus, indirectness is achieved by the conscious use of potentially diffuse pronouns. Thus, I aim at demonstrating how the traditionally-labeled 'impersonal' pronoun *uno* 'one' is, in the context of Spanish parliamentary talk, significantly not impersonal in its use. A pragmatic analysis of its occurrences shows that the referent of *uno* can be easily interpreted through a careful reading of the dialogic interaction that takes place in the Spanish parliament. As a result of the observations presented in our analysis, a re-evaluation of the label 'impersonal' is suggested, one that accounts more precisely for the different scopes this pronoun encompasses. I argue that the potential vagueness of *uno* provides politicians with an opportunity to engage in self-praise while saving professional face, as well as with the possibility of mitigating the directness of their attacks against political opponents. This is due to a strategic avoidance of stridence, too costly to politicians from a public-image viewpoint.

Members of Parliament (MPs) are indeed aware of the vagueness of *uno* and take full advantage of it, conscious that the use of personal pronouns (he/ she/ you) as terms of addressing other MPs could result in a violation of professional etiquette as established in the rules and regulations of the Spanish Parliament. This is characteristic in parliamentary discourse since parliaments are the site of political - dialogical - struggle. Stemming precisely from this trait, the data presented in this paper suggest a much more refined categorization of *uno*, one that accounts for its polyvalence. Ultimately, I propose that rather than just political activity, the extralinguistic factors (i.e. personal etiquette and general community-preserving habits) surrounding a parliament are in fact more determinant in the changes of scope of pronominal forms.

2. Parliamentary discourse

Earlier research has traditionally regarded political language as being somewhat homogenous, focusing primarily upon the language used in electoral meetings as the most prototypical type of political discourse (see, e.g., Geis 1987). It is clear, however, that different circumstances and communicative purposes alter the linguistic significance of politicians' communications with each other (e.g. within their parliamentary community) as well as with their broader audiences. Thus, large public electoral meetings or press conferences are substantially different in nature from in-group, routine interactions such as parliamentary debates. As Van Dijk (2000) suggests, parliamentary talk is (and therefore ought to be treated as) a specific genre in and of itself.

Parliaments have been perceived as communities in their own right. In this vein, Juliver and Stroschein propose that 'clues to stability and inclusiveness of the political community and, therefore, of the political system are to be found in its consensus on identity, purpose, rights and obligations, and peaceful conflict resolution' (1999: 439). This is particularly evident in the case of parliaments, which represent (and are held by the citizenry to be) the highest symbol of a country's political system; the most relevant issues in a democratic nation's political life are debated and resolved in parliaments. In addition, the very process by way of which citizens gain access to professional politics,

and are then chosen as MPs by the constituencies to which they belong, is highly selective. It is of no surprise, therefore, that MPs share a sense of identity (as professional politicians, as representatives of their constituencies, and as representatives of their respective regions) and a common purpose; that is, the pacific resolution of issues.

At the same time, constant power struggles constitute another characteristic that sets parliamentary talk apart from other types of political language. In other words, dynamic interactions within the membership of a parliament are characterized by attempts to gain power by one side (party or collection of parties) and efforts to maintain power by the other side (single party or coalition government). Linguistically, this imprints a series of traits that distinguishes parliamentary language from that of electoral meetings, insofar as politicians consciously strive to attract the highest number of potential voters. This, as a consequence, diffuses the scope of the deictic forms (*us/ you/ we/ them*) typically used to establish relationships between speakers and their interlocutors.

Moreover, as was already mentioned, a parliament is perceived by the citizenry as the principal icon of high politics, from which a certain degree of civility and etiquette is expected. In the case of the Spanish parliament, polite manners and professional etiquette are enforced by the President of the Parliament (PoP henceforth). Aside from controlling the allotted podium time for each MP, one of the main tasks of the PoP is to ensure that these rules and regulations are respected. This code stipulates that, in the event that an MP refers to another MP in a direct and offensive manner, the latter can request a *turno de réplica* (a retort) by way of which s/he can contest the accusation or request an apology. If the offending MP refuses to apologize or incurs in further impolite behavior, s/he may be severely reprimanded or sanctioned by the PoP. It is important to bear in mind that everything spoken within the Spanish Parliament, as is the case in many other countries, is subject to scrupulous transcription and is turned into public documents, accessible by the citizens in different ways (in hard copies at public libraries, on the parliament's website, etc.).

In addition to this systematic transcription, footage and audio excerpts of the sessions at the Parliament are routinely broadcast on television and radio. As a result of this, politicians are aware that an outburst of anger or a particularly tense exchange with an opponent, especially in important debates, is virtually guaranteed to be publicly disseminated via the media. Consequently, it is in the best interest of MPs to minimize directness and resort to more strategic and less confrontational means of verbal attack.

3. Pronominal use in parliamentary talk

Numerous authors have acknowledged the importance of pronominal reference in human communication. Fortanet (2004) highlights personal pronouns as a key element when studying processes of negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer. More specifically, an extensive literature describes the pragmatics of pronominal use in political language (see, e.g., Beard 2000; Ilie 2003; Wilson 1990; and Zupnik 1994). The issue of how politicians express their beliefs and position themselves in terms of alliances and opposition to other political parties through the use of pronouns, in particular, is long standing (Brown & Gilman 1960; De Fina 1995; Íñigo Mora 2004; Pennycook 1994; Van Dijk 2005).

Prior analyses of pronouns have taken into account the intersecting axes of status, familiarity, gender, and age. Beyond these factors, however, it is essential to analyze more closely which linguistic and extralinguistic factors affect the intention with which deictic forms are used in political language. In this respect, the analyses carried out by Maitland and Wilson (1987) and Wilson (1990), all within a pragmatic approach, are seminal to the study of the implications and nuances in the use of pronouns in political discourse. Politicians, according to these researchers, are fully aware of the possibilities and limitations made available by the use of pronouns. It is well understood, for example, that pronouns are used to mitigate responsibility, such as is the case with the use of the potentially vague *we* which facilitates the establishment of alliances with particular groups or, alternatively, the exclusion and labeling of groups as 'others'.

In regard to research concerned with deixis in Spanish political language, Blas Arroyo (2000, 2003) has offered a cogent account of the scope of the employment of different pronouns in the case of media interviews with politicians. Other authors, such as Morales and Prego (2002), have studied their use in electoral campaigns, while Otaola's corpus-based analysis focuses on the personal pronouns used by the King of Spain (2000). The present study attempts to shed light on this aspect of linguistic interaction in an area which has remained largely unexplored: Parliamentary debate.

4. Methodology

This study offers a quantitative comparison of two large corpora: Transcripts of sessions of the Spanish Parliament and interviews with non-political individuals in Spain. In order to locate and contrast the occurrences of the pronoun *uno* within these corpora, I use a software program specially designed for corpus analysis, *Wordsmith*TM (Scott 2004). This program enables researchers to rapidly retrieve all the uses of a particular linguistic feature, and carefully analyze each instance. In addition, this is an invaluable tool for retrieving the lexical context of every occurrence, as well as for locating the wider linguistic context in which each form is embedded. Once all the pertinent forms of *uno* were appropriately located, I proceeded to examine the scope of each form as relevant to the immediate context, both textually as well as in the general, wider framework of the embedding discussion.

5. Data

The parliamentary discourse corpus (PD henceforth) consists of 16 complete transcripts of parliamentary sessions from years 2000-2002, selected randomly (see Appendix). These are available online (www.congreso.es), in their electronic format, or in hardcopy at the archive of the Spanish Parliament and a few other institutional libraries, and are comprehensive transcriptions of everything that is said in the official sessions of the Spanish Parliament. Considering that the purpose of these transcripts is to produce a permanent record in the form of public document, repetitions, expressions of hesitation, slips of the tongue and repairs are omitted. All other utterances, including interruptions, laughter, etc., are recorded in the *Diario de Sesiones* transcripts.

The control corpus for this study is comprised of 218 oral interviews, obtained from the online version of traditional Spanish newspapers (*El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo*), as well as online-only magazines (*ciberletras*, *egiptología.com*, *macusuarios.com*). In order to ensure the quality of the comparison, only Castilian-Spanish speaking interviewees were included in this corpus. Moreover, to avoid topic redundancy, there are no interviews with politicians. Rather, the control corpus includes, on the other hand, a wide spectrum of interviewees (musicians, sports figures, writers, actors, etc.). This control corpus was collected taking into account that all newspaper interviews share with political discourse a certain degree of attention to form. Both types of discourse have in common, at least partially, some sort of previous mental structure accompanied by a high degree of improvisation. While newspaper interviews may initially seem casual and non-prepared, awareness on the part of the interviewee compels her to produce (or attempt to) more structured argumentations than in completely informal, not-recorded conversation. In the case of parliamentary talk, in turn, while some addresses are at least partially prepared, MPs engage in improvised talk when replying to their interlocutors.

Oral data comprised of conversations conveyed in either a highly formal or completely casual register would have created important disparities in relation to the parliamentary discourse corpus. Table 1 provides information on the corpora analyzed:

Table 1. Comparison between control and PD corpora

	Parliamentary speech	Control corpus
pages	1,965	1,419
words	379,199	379,298

6. Semantic references and discourse functions of the impersonal pronoun *uno*

Traditional grammars have typically explained that pronoun *uno* is simply an impersonal pronoun, generally without further analysis. *Uno* has typically received the label of *pronombre impersonal* ‘impersonal pronoun’, or *pronombre indeterminado* ‘indefinite pronoun’ (DRAE, 2001). Several authors, however, have analyzed with greater detail its range and scope, while always including it within the paradigm of ‘impersonal’ or ‘indefinite’ forms. Hence, Fernández Ramírez (1987) acknowledges a link between *uno* and first person pronouns. Another researcher, Gómez Torrego, in his 1992 study of grammatical impersonalization, claims that, while *uno* is essentially a vehicle for impersonalization through generalization and indetermination, it may, in some cases (as happens with the general *tú*), hide a precise, definite referent. Martínez (1989) recognizes a close(r) connection to the speaker. As he puts it ‘uno/a ‘impersonal’ es, semánticamente, un ‘omnipersonal’, si bien es el hablante el que queda en el primer plano de la alusión ‘(masc/fem.) one is semantically ‘omnipersonal’, although it is the speaker who remains the primary referent’ (p.60). This is also observed by Mendikoetxea (1999), who notices that *uno* may be utilized as a stylistic variation of the first person to produce a general utterance conveying a speaker's personal experience.

While these observations appropriately address the connection between *uno* and the speaker, they fail to account for the versatility of its scope as it appears in specific contexts, as they refer to the prototypical *uno*, as the following example illustrates:

-*Cuando uno viaja fuera, es importante respetar las costumbres locales.*

-When *one* travels abroad, it is important to observe local customs.

The example above shows how *uno* can be removed from any specific referent. In fact, this sentence can be uttered as a warning, as advice, etc., by someone who has never traveled abroad. Considering this possibility, it is clear that *uno* is not necessarily (although it could be) referring to the speaker.

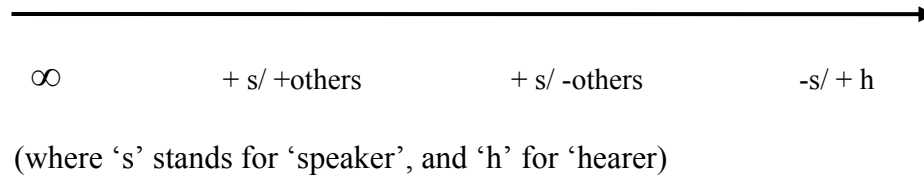
In order to accurately describe the dialogic functions that *uno* may fulfill in parliamentary debates, it is crucial to re-evaluate the range of its scope. In this sense, the present paper agrees with Gervasi (2007) in that the study of impersonal expressions must not only account for their reference in isolation but must be examined taking into account the rich, nuanced context in which they appear. In the next section I suggest a more comprehensive account of the semantic references of *uno*, based upon the occurrences identified in my sample analysis.

7. Toward a taxonomy of *uno*

Even a perfunctory reading of the textual samples used in this analysis immediately suggests that *uno* is often used as a means of establishing strong contextual relationships between speaker and hearer. In other words, our analysis shows that in most cases in both corpora, the 'impersonal' value of *uno* is in fact not its most recurrent one. Analyses of the data reveal distinct representations, ranging from attachment to the speaker to total detachment. In addition to the impersonal *uno*¹ already discussed - one that, expressed in isolation, may point to a potentially infinite number of referents - the data suggest two major levels of representation. First, in what I suggest should be defined as a 'self-referential' function, the pronoun bears a strong relationship with the speaker. Second, in what might be termed the 'other-referential' function, the referent to the pronoun is distanced from the speaker and can only be linked to the interlocutor, for reasons that will be discussed below.

It is more accurate, when analyzing *uno* in its contextualized usage, to speak of a semantic spectrum. On one extreme we find the *uno* that has typically been labeled as 'impersonal', whose referent can be applicable to anyone (the speaker may or may not be included), and on the opposite extreme of the spectrum we find that the referent can only be the interlocutor. For the first type of *uno* we suggest the term 'omnipersonal', in agreement with the definition suggested by Martínez, since its referent is indeterminate and potentially infinite. The following illustration provides a schematic idea of the aforementioned spectrum:

¹ It must be noted that only relevant instances of *uno* have been analyzed; partitives (*uno de los amigos del presidente* 'one of the president's friends'), numerals (*usted trajo uno* 'you brought one') and certain expressions (*de uno a uno*, *para cada uno* 'one by one', 'one for each one') have been discarded from the analysis.

Figure 1: Scope spectrum, ranging from wider to narrower reference

Taking into account the semantic references of all the instances of *uno* identified in a comparison of parliamentary and non-parliamentary corpora, I suggest four distinct variants of *uno* vis-à-vis their referent:

a) Omnipersonal [\pm speaker]: The referent can be any identity. Inclusion of the speaker is possible, but not clear in many cases. As it has been mentioned, this type of *uno* has traditionally received the label of 'impersonal'.

b) Self-referential [+ speaker, - other referents]: The referent of this *uno* is exclusively and univocally the speaker. The linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts rule out any other possible referents.

c) Self-referential experiential [+ speaker, + other potential referents]: While intimately linked to the speaker, there is a lower degree of attachment to the speaker and, thus, a more open interpretation in respect to other referents.

d) Other-referential [- speaker, + interlocutor]: The interpretation of this other-referential pronoun is univocally in regard to the interlocutor. It refers to characteristics (attitudes or speech) of the interlocutor and never those of the speaker.

8. Discussion

As was pointed out, the results of the analysis showed that in both corpora, the true omnipersonal *uno* is not its most frequent form:

Table 2. Functions of *uno* in PD and everyday talk

	PD corpus		control corpus	
	tokens	% of total	tokens	% of total
omnipersonal	18	40.9	14	10.9
self-referential	1	2.3	87	68
experiential	2	4.5	24	18.8
other-referential	23	52.3	3	2.3
total	44		128	

It is essential to note here that the boundaries between these four labels are not always well defined. Rather, a careful reading of the context is necessary to understand the distinctions. Next, I provide an explanation of the most relevant features of each category, taking into consideration the discursive functions they fulfill.

9. Discursive functions of *uno*

Omnipersonal *uno*: This form of *uno* (which does not refer to any entity in particular) appears in the data as being removed from first person references. It is used to express ideas that are theoretically applicable to anyone:

- (1) P- *Qué consejos le das a la persona que emprende su primer viaje?*
 R- *Lo más importante es saber elegir el tipo de viaje que uno quiere realizar. Hoy en día hay muchos tipos de ofertas en el mercado. Primero hay que decidirse si uno va a viajar por su cuenta o bien prefiere un viaje organizado.*
 (Jaume Vivó. Egyptologist. Amigosdelaegiptología.com March 2003)

‘Q- What advice would you give to a person who is about to take one’s first trip?

A- The most important thing is to know how to choose the type of trip one wants to take. First, (one) has to decide whether one is going to travel alone or whether one will travel as part of an organized trip.’

In this case, the speaker is not particularly concerned with any specific referents. *Uno* can, therefore, be easily rephrased with the general *la persona* ‘the person’ or *la persona en cuestión* ‘the person in question’: Thus, the example above could be rephrased as follows: *lo más importante es saber elegir el tipo de viaje que (la persona/ la persona en cuestión) quiere realizar*: ‘the important thing is to know how to choose the type of trip (the person/ the person in question) wants to take’. Considering the fact that the speaker is a frequent traveler to Egypt (he is an Egyptologist), his opinion does not seem to concern his own experience, since he is providing advice for those considering traveling to Egypt for the first time. This function also appears in the PD corpus, where *uno* may relate to the entire citizenry:

- (2) *El señor LÓPEZ GARRIDO: (...) Esto es algo natural no sólo para el censo promocional, que es a lo que se limitan ustedes, sino para los demás casos; porque aparte del censo promocional, que por cierto todavía no existe, circulan datos personales en todo tipo de archivos informáticos y hay que controlarlo y decir que sólo podrán ser cedidos, tratados o utilizados si uno lo consiente expresamente.*
 (Diario de Sesiones, 29 October 2002, p.9927)

‘Mr. LÓPEZ GARRIDO: (...) This is something expected not only in the promotional census, of which you are primarily concerned, but also for the remainder of cases; because aside from the promotional census, which by the way still does not exist, there is a circulation of personal data in all types of computer files which must be controlled and only shared, used, or treated if one expresses his/her consent explicitly.’

Self-referential *uno*: Most cases of the non-omnipersonal *uno*, however, seem to originate from the speaker's standpoint. In the next example, any substitutions of *uno* with generic expressions such as *la persona en cuestión* 'the person in question' or '*cualquiera*' 'anyone' are impossible. *Uno* here reflects only the experience of the speaker, and can only be substituted by the first person pronoun *yo*.

- (3) *P- Por último, una curiosidad, tú participaste en la película 'Polígono Sur' de Dominique Abel sobre el barrio de las Tres Mil Viviendas de Sevilla, ¿te gusta como ha quedado el resultado de la película, es una imagen fiel del barrio?*
R- Está graciosa, tiene su punto gracioso, uno conoce a toda la gente del barrio y te gusta verlos, es un documental sobre todo aquello, se ve muy natural todo.
 (Diego Amador. Flamenco singer. deflamenco.com March 2004)

'Q- Finally, a matter of curiosity: you participated in the film 'Polígono Sur', by Dominique Abel about the neighborhood of the Three Thousand Houses in Seville. Do you like the final result of the film, is it a faithful depiction of the neighborhood?

A-It's funny, there's something about it, one knows everyone in the neighborhood and (you) like to see them, it's a documentary about all that, it all looks very natural.'

In the PD corpus, the use of the 'self-referential' *uno* seems to be connected to the professional *yo* (see Blas Arroyo 2003). In particular, it provides the speaker with the possibility of declaring his/her achievements or of mentioning his/her prestige while avoiding the overly direct use of *yo*, which would potentially be perceived as inelegant. In the next example, the Secretary of Labor uses *uno* in order to highlight his professional standing. Notice how he is claiming credit by implicitly referring to past achievements.

- (4) *El señor MINISTRO DE TRABAJO Y ASUNTOS SOCIALES (Aparicio Pérez):*
(...) Hombre, hay una partida que ha bajado de manera muy significativa que son las prestaciones de desempleados. ¿Por qué?, porque hay muchísimos menos parados, no porque ni una sola de las prestaciones individuales se haya tocado en el pasado o se vaya a tocar en el futuro. Ya sé que usted esto no lo va a admitir, pero es que es fácilmente demostrable. Ninguna de las reglas de cálculo va a cambiar; ni ha cambiado -y en eso uno goza de cierto crédito, el pasado está ahí- ni va a cambiar, y eso no es cuestión de voluntad, como no ha bajado, como no se puede hacer la afirmación de que estemos peor en el gasto en pensiones, como no se puede decir que estemos gastando menos en sanidad ni en ninguna de las partidas sociales básicas.
 (Diario de Sesiones, 24 April 2002, p.8017)

'The SECRETARY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (Aparicio Pérez):
 (...) Well, there is an item here that has decreased in a very significant way: the unemployment benefit. Why? Because there are significantly fewer unemployed people, not because these unemployment benefits have been used in the past or will be used in the future. (I) already know that you are not going to recognize this, but it is easy to prove. None of the means of calculation of this item will change, nor have they changed - and in this respect one takes some credit, the past is laid out - and it will not change, and this is not a question of will, as it has not decreased, just like it cannot be said that that (we)

are worse off in the expenses for retirement benefits, as it cannot be said that (we) are spending less in health care nor in any of the basic social benefits.'

Here *uno* can accept only a rephrasing with a reference to the speaker (*y en eso yo gozo/ Ø gozo de cierto crédito*) 'and in that respect I/ (I) take some credit' and precludes any impersonal expression such *la persona/ cualquiera* 'the person/ anyone'.

Self-referential –experiential *uno*: Self-referential *uno* may be conveyed in a less precise way, one that opens the possibility - at least initially - to wider interpretations. I would suggest that this label stems from the conceptualization of 'experiential you' proposed by Maitland and Wilson (1987). The authors suggest a pronoun *you* that trespasses the semantic range of a vocative and points to a more universal experience. This can be found in giving advice (e.g. 'you don't want to go to that part of Miami at night) or while expressing general truths that may or may not apply to the interlocutor but are readily recognized and agreed upon (e.g. 'when *you* have your first child, it's all worrying all the time').

In relation to *uno*, the speaker seems to convey a sense of 'experientiality'; it also seems to stem from a more general experience than from a strictly personal account. However, this reference still appertains to the area of the speaker. While potentially wider in scope, it still is linked to a first-person reference. This next example provides an instance of 'experiential' *uno* also followed by a noteworthy first person plural reference:

- (5) *Ahora, con la vejez, los achaques, la hipertensión, la gota, pues ya está uno cada vez más discapacitado o más dificultado para ejercer la actividad nocturna que tanto nos gustaba. Pero cuando estoy trabajando descubro que la literatura es una maravillosa, fascinante habitación donde tú entras y te puedes quedar ahí ya toda la vida.*
(Caballero Bonald. Writer El País 22 August 2000)

'Now, with old age, with ailments, high blood pressure, gout, one is increasingly unable or more restricted to live the nightlife that (we) used to like so much. But when (I) am working (I) discover that literature is a wonderful, fascinating room that you can enter and you can stay there for the rest of your life.'

In both cases, *uno* is intimately related to the speaker's experience. In the first case, this seems corroborated by a displaced use of a second person pronoun, also referencing the speaker (*te gusta verlos*) 'you like to see them', while in the second example it is reinforced by a first person plural reference (*nos gustaba*) 'we liked it'.

In the PD corpus, experiential *uno* may fulfill an attack function by means of implication. In the following example, MP Eduardo Zaplana launches a double implication with the use of *uno*. After being accused by the Socialist party of not fulfilling his promises of aid to the disabled, the Secretary of Labor makes a general statement by way of which he acclaims his own credibility while downplaying that of his opponent.

- (6) *El señor MINISTRO DE TRABAJO Y ASUNTOS SOCIALES (Zaplana Hernández-Soro): Gracias, señora presidenta. Señoría, uno adquiere la credibilidad en función de los resultados de su gestión y no de las*

manifestaciones políticas. (Rumores.) Sus señorías se han pasado mucho tiempo diciendo que no hacíamos nada. Cuando hacemos alguna propuesta coherente y presupuestada, inmediatamente dicen que no hay cobertura presupuestaria porque su grupo no quiere que se haga.

(*Diario de Sesiones*, 27 November 2002, p.10636)

‘The SECRETARY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (Zaplana Hernández-Soro): Thank you, Madam President. Honorable Gentleman, one earns credibility by way of the results of his actions, and not because of political statements (Rumors). The Honorable Members have spent a long time saying that (we) didn’t do anything. When (we) make some coherent and balanced proposal, (you) say that there is not sufficient budget because your party does not want it to be accomplished.’

On this occasion, Mr. Zaplana had presented the MPs with a summary of the improvements in the employment situation in Spain, and during the *turnos de réplica* (retorts) he had been criticized for his lack of credibility (he was appointed to the position of Secretary of Labor just a few months prior). It seems plausible to conclude that Mr. Zaplana is highlighting, once again, the success of the government to which he belongs while dismissing the attacks coming from the opposition party.

The next example illustrates how the use of the self-referential (experiential) variety can be intentionally addressed to the interlocutor. As can be seen, the addressee is, in this case, aware of this and counterattacks, actually reproducing, during a *turno de réplica*, the precise wording; that the Secretary of Labor has used to refer implicitly to the Socialist party in general using *uno*. After three exchanges with other members of the opposition, one MP picks up the reference in order to contest the (implicit) accusation:

- (7) *El señor MINISTRO DE TRABAJO Y ASUNTOS SOCIALES (Zaplana Hernández-Soro): Señoría, cada uno es prisionero de sus compromisos, de sus promesas y de las realidades que es capaz de llevar adelante. Mis compromisos ya están formulados expresamente en esta Cámara y, por tanto, S.S. los conoce perfectamente; los ratifico todos.*

(*Diario de Sesiones* 27 November 2002, p. 10636)

(...)

La señora GARCÍA PÉREZ: Gracias, señora presidenta. Señor Zaplana, por supuesto que no pensamos que somos todos iguales. Usted ha dicho que cada uno es prisionero de sus compromisos y siento decirle que a este ritmo usted va a estar atrapado entre los barrotes de sus promesas. Por ello le pregunto: ¿cómo va a cumplir su compromiso de crear 400.000 plazas de guarderías y centros de preescolar en cuatro años, cuando únicamente están presupuestadas 2.700 para el próximo?

(*ibid.* p.10638)

‘The SECRETARY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (Zaplana Hernández-Soro): Honorable Gentleman, one is a prisoner of his commitments, of his promises, and of the realities that he is capable of carrying out. My commitments are already explicitly laid out in this Chamber, and, consequently, my Honorable friend knows them perfectly; I corroborate them all.

(...)

Ms. GARCÍA PÉREZ: Thank you, Madam President. Mr. Zaplana, of course (we) do not think that (we) are all the same. You have said that everyone is

prisoner of their own commitments and (I) am sorry to tell you that, at this rate, *you* will be trapped behind the bars of your promises. This is why (I) am asking you: how are (you) going to fulfill your promise of creating 400,000 kindergarten and elementary school vacancies in four years, when there is only budget for 2,700 for next year?’

Other-referential *uno*: The most noticeable difference between the PD and the everyday corpora, however, resides in the ‘other-referential’ *uno*. I suggest this label to refer to the implicit references to the interlocutor that are conveyed by the pronoun *uno*. Although as Martínez (1989) has pointed out, the ‘impersonal’ *uno* lacks the anaphoric character of its partitive counterpart (such as is *tengo cuatro amigos chilenos, uno de ellos juega al polo* ‘(I)’ve got four Chilean friends, *one of them* plays polo’), this does not preclude this form from referring univocally to the other main entity in a dialogue. Our data confirm that although *uno* is not linked to an antecedent, it may be used to allude to a referent unambiguously. In the control corpus, it refers directly to the interlocutor:

- (8) *P: Recuerdo uno se daba clases con el otro y era peor que la otra. ¿Cómo es que el domingo de no poder ponerla con un hierro en el hoyo 14, uno termina ganando?*

R: Pues, pues mira, el año '99 cuando gané, la semana anterior en Atlanta que jugamos, no pasé el corte, estaba pegando al drive, pero bueno o sea, a todos los lados, a la derecha, izquierda (...)

(J.M. Olazábal, golf player. solo-golf.com. March 2004)

‘Q: (I) Remember one was taking classes with the other one and was worse than the (female) other. How is it possible that on Sunday from being unable to finish hole 14 with an iron, one ends up winning?’

A: Well, look, in '99, when (I) won, the week before in Atlanta that (we) played, (I) didn't make the cut, (I) was hitting the drive, but, well, that is, everywhere, left, right (...)

The reference of *uno* clearly cannot be substituted in this case by *cualquiera* ‘anyone’, given that the interlocutor is the only possible subject of the verb. This is an interaction between a journalist and an athlete. The reporter is wondering in the course of the interview how the golfer managed to win a tournament despite having started in less than favorable fashion (expressed by the ‘inability’ to score with an iron club at hole 14). Rephrasing with any other impersonal expressions is not a viable option. Only vocatives (*tú/ usted*) are plausible alternatives (*¿cómo es que...terminas ganando /usted termina ganando?*) ‘how is it that you (T)/(V) end up winning?’. This type of ‘other-referential’ *uno* is the most frequent in the PD corpus (52.3% of the instances). It is used fundamentally to dismiss an opponent’s speech or point of view. The next example illustrates this point. After being accused of abusive behavior in his negotiation with the unions, the Secretary of Labor refers univocally (yet taking advantage of the superficial ambivalence of *uno*) to his interlocutor:

- (9) *El señor MINISTRO DE TRABAJO Y ASUNTOS SOCIALES (Aparicio Pérez): (...)* *He oído aquí alguna intervención que me ha dejado perplejo, porque dentro de lo que puede entenderse como ejercicio normal de la democracia*

todos tenemos obligaciones, pero hay funciones felizmente reservadas, en este caso a los jueces. Cuando uno afirma con la rotundidad con que se dice que algo es inconstitucional, que algo es abusivo o ilegal, yo veo que lo que está intentando es atribuirse esas competencias, y eso sí es cambiar las reglas, porque a continuación el señor Llamazares en este caso nos ha dicho que íbamos a cambiar todas las reglas.

(*Diario de Sesiones*, 18 June 2002, p.8594)

‘The SECRETARY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (Aparicio Pérez): (...) (I) have heard here some speeches that have perplexed me, because within what can be understood as the normal activity of a democracy we all have obligations, but there are some functions that are happily restricted, such as the judges’ activity. When one affirms emphatically that something is unconstitutional, that it is abusive or illegal, I see that what is being attempted is the attribution of those achievements to oneself; and that is indeed an attempt to change the rules, because afterward that Mr. Llamazares in this particular case has told (us) that (we) were going to change all the rules.’

Although here paraphrasing with *una persona* or *cualquiera* seems possible, conjugation in the indicative dissipates the potential ambiguity. Compare:

-Cuando uno afirme que algo es inconstitucional, está intentando atribuirse esas competencias

‘When *one* might affirm that something is unconstitutional, (he/she) is trying to attribute those powers for themselves’

-Cuando uno afirma que algo es inconstitucional, está intentando atribuirse esas competencias

‘When *one* affirms that something is unconstitutional, (he/she) is trying to attribute those powers for themselves’

While in the first sentence *one* can only be hypothetical (not yet fulfilled), the second instance may or may not be hypothetical; the actual wording of the speaker’s interlocutor, however, rules out any ambiguity.

The next example is particularly illustrative. The speaker in this instance is denouncing the Socialist party for having investigated his family’s finances. Mr. Rato, the vice-president of the Spanish government, had been under close scrutiny for having allegedly arranged advantageous loans to businesses run by some of his relatives. Notice how Mr. Rato uses the construction of ‘pasiva con *se*’ (also called ‘passive reflexive’) (see Álvarez Martínez 1989) which allows the speaker to mystify the agent (*se confeccionan*). He portrays this investigation as a general procedure by referring to it in the plural form *familiares de adversarios políticos* ‘relatives of political adversaries’, in combination with the ‘other-referential’ *uno*:

- (10) *El señor VICEPRESIDENTE SEGUNDO DEL GOBIERNO PARA ASUNTOS ECONÓMICOS Y MINISTRO DE ECONOMÍA (De Rato y Figaredo): Tengo que decir dos cuestiones más, si me da tiempo. La primera, señor Caldera, es que cuando se confeccionan dossiers sobre familiares de adversarios políticos*

con datos protegidos por la ley, uno debe ser consciente de las consecuencias de sus actos. En segundo lugar, señor Caldera, y sobre la actividad económica, les voy a dar un consejo al señor Rodríguez Zapatero, aquí presente, y a usted: no espere una desaceleración económica. (Rumores). (Diario de Sesiones, 22 May 2002, p. 8231)

‘The SECOND VICEPRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND SECRETARY OF ECONOMY (De Rato y Figaredo): (I) have to mention two more issues, if (I) have the time. The first one, Mr. Caldera, is that when documents about the relatives of political adversaries are created, using data that are protected by the law, one must be conscious of the consequences of his acts. Second, Mr. Caldera, and this is about economic activity, (I) am going to give Mr. Rodríguez Zapatero, who is currently here, and you some advice: do not expect an economic deceleration. (Rumors)’

Sometimes attacks with *uno* are carried out in the form of commonsensical claims. In the next example, the Secretary of Labor and Social Affairs is accusing the unions indirectly of not being willing to negotiate. This particular excerpt occurred only a week before the general strike of June 20, 2002. After a long debate with the representatives of the largest worker unions, Mr. Aparicio explains what, in his opinion, these representatives should do if they met the conditions attributed to *uno*:

- (11) *El señor MINISTRO DE TRABAJO Y ASUNTOS SOCIALES (Aparicio Pérez): (...) Siempre he dicho y mantengo que no son vías alternativas ni antagónicas el diálogo social y el diálogo político, pero me parece bastante obvio que cuando el diálogo social se hace inviable -insisto- pese a cuatro invitaciones, pese a la existencia de una estructura de método y alcance de la propia reforma, si uno tiene convicciones, si uno tiene también compromisos ante la propia ciudadanía y si uno tiene compromisos ante esta misma Cámara de lograr mejoras para la sociedad, hay que buscar necesariamente la vía democrática natural, que no es otra que la vía parlamentaria. Entendiendo que eso lo piensa también una mayoría de la Cámara, sin culpabilizar porque no es el momento de culpabilizar a nadie, pero reconociendo que el Gobierno sigue sentado a la mesa y no solamente sigue sentado a la mesa, sino que mantiene una estructura que para una mayoría del Parlamento permite el diálogo, me gustaría hacer algunos comentarios. (Diario de Sesiones, 13 June 2002, p.8593)*

‘The SECRETARY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (Aparicio Pérez): (...) (I) always said and (I) maintain that social and political dialogue are not alternative or antagonistic means, but it seems quite obvious to me that when social dialogue becomes unviable—(I) insist—despite four invitations, despite the existence of a structure for the method and reach of the very reform, if one has convictions, if one is committed to the citizenry and if one is committed to this very Chamber to attempt to improve this society, there is a need to look for a natural, democratic way, which is none other than the parliamentary way. (I) understand that this is also the way a majority of this Chamber thinks, without blaming anyone because it is not the time to place blame on anyone, but rather the moment to recognize that the Government is still sitting at the table. Not

only sitting at the table, but maintaining a structure so that the majority of the Parliament allows dialogue, I'd like to make some comments.'

10. Conclusion

In this article I have investigated the employment by politicians and professionals of the pronoun *uno*. As can be inferred from the analysis of two large corpora, the pronoun *uno* is far richer in terms of its potential referents and discursive functions than is traditionally recognized. In particular, the analysis presented in the current article contradicts the traditional categorization of *uno* as impersonal. On the contrary, it seems plausible to adduce that *uno* presents two major scopes: In its more vague form, it constitutes an 'omnipersonal' pronoun, since its reference may be applied to any entity. In its more contextually-embedded form, as has been shown in the situation that concerns our research, it refers univocally to the interlocutor(s).

The theoretical frameworks of corpus linguistics and pragmatics allow us to focus on the intentionality of its use through the examination of occurrences of *uno* within a large sample of data. In the control corpus, for instance, *uno* is largely used as a means to gaining some distance from one's experience. This may be due to the general perception that speaking overtly about oneself is generally perceived as redundant, and often inelegant. *Uno*, consequently, helps the speaker detach herself from her narrative, avoiding altogether a repetitive use of *yo*. This may explain why, used in first person reference, is significantly more frequent in the control corpus. Politicians, on the other hand, may also utilize impersonal expressions in order to gain political credit without sounding too boastful.

The most remarkable difference between the control and the PD corpus, however, is to be found in the use of *uno* as a vehicle to refer to an interlocutor: While the other-referential *uno* seldom appears in this corpus (on only 3 occasions), it is more frequent in the PD corpus, where it appears on 23 occasions. In this sense, the comparison between two corpora that share an essential common factor of improvisation and attention to form ensures solid conclusions. As can be seen, political activity has an important effect in the way pronouns vary their semantic scopes.

Our data demonstrate that MPs use it to make explicit references to their interlocutors and thus are able to attack them without violating the rules and regulations of the Spanish parliament. Professional etiquette, in this sense, calls for containment and MPs attempt to avoid continuous *turnos de réplica*, which are burdensome and often provoke subsequent replies, slowing parliamentary sessions significantly. In addition to this, and as has been mentioned above, the constant broadcasting of parliamentary sessions through the media calls for careful and polite verbal behavior on the part of MPs.

In addition to revealing new information about pronominal uses and parliamentary talk, this paper highlights the need to base definitions of grammatical devices such as pronouns on rigorous, contextualized quantitative data. The observation of the behavior of the occurrences of determined linguistic devices (such as impersonal pronoun *uno* in the present paper) in their larger context may uncover additional meanings and functions that could otherwise be overlooked.

Appendix

Parliamentary debates of the political discourse corpus (all available at www.congreso.es):

Diario de Sesiones, 13 September 2000.

Diario de Sesiones, 20 December 2000.

Diario de Sesiones, 4 April 2001.

Diario de Sesiones, 16 May 2001.

Diario de Sesiones, 20 June 2001.

Diario de Sesiones, 26 September 2001.

Diario de Sesiones, 13 February 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 20 February 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 6 March 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 24 April 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 22 May 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 13 June 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 18 June 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 29 October 2002.

Diario de Sesiones, 27 November 2002.

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