

# You and we: Impersonal second person singular and other referential devices in Spanish sociolinguistic interviews<sup>☆</sup>



Pekka Posio<sup>\*</sup>

Department of Romance Studies and Classics, Universitetsvägen 10 B, Stockholm University, 10691 Stockholm, Sweden

Received 10 September 2015; received in revised form 26 April 2016; accepted 30 April 2016

Available online 27 May 2016

## Abstract

The present investigation deals with the variable use of referential devices expressing generic or speaker-oriented reference in a corpus of sociolinguistic interviews where Spanish informants talk about their studies and work experience. The analysis focuses on impersonal second person singulars (2SG-imp), which are compared with the first person singular (1SG) and plural (1PL), *uno* 'one' and reflexive-based impersonal constructions. Quantitative analysis shows that age, gender and familiarity between the speakers are significant factors in accounting for the inter-speaker variation. There is a negative correlation between age and 2SG-imp usage and a positive correlation between age and 1PL usage, and female speakers use both constructions more than men. I discuss the relation of the choice of referring expressions and the expression of intersubjectivity in the interviews. Qualitative analysis of the interview content suggests that there is a connection between the choice of referential devices and generational differences in the choice of individual vs. collective perspective and the inclusion of the addressee.

© 2016 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

**Keywords:** Pronouns; Age; Gender; Spanish; Intersubjectivity

## 1. Introduction

In Spanish as in many other languages, second person singular verb forms and pronouns can receive impersonal readings where they do not express direct reference to the addressee (see, *inter alia*, Vicente Mateu, 1994:201; Barrajón López, 2005; Kluge, 2010:1111; Serrano and Aijón Oliva, 2012, 2014). Examples (1) and (2) illustrate the impersonal uses of the second person singular (referred to with the abbreviation 2SG-imp in this paper) with a generic and a speaker-oriented reading respectively. In (1), the second person singular is used to evoke 'any person from Madrid visiting Salamanca'. Example (2) differs from (1) in that the speaker is referring to her own experiences in the past. In such contexts, the second person singular pronoun and verb forms acquire a speaker-oriented reference that does not generalize the experience to everyone but rather invites the addressee to imagine herself in the situation, thus expressing intersubjectivity between the speakers (see section 3.3).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>☆</sup> The research was funded by the Kone Foundation (Finland) as part of the research project entitled *Human impersonals in Spanish and Portuguese: Towards a usage-based account*. Part of the research was carried out at the universities of Cologne, Germany and Ghent, Belgium.

E-mail address: [pekka.posio@su.se](mailto:pekka.posio@su.se).

\* Tel.: +468163715.

E-mail address: [pekka.posio@su.se](mailto:pekka.posio@su.se).

<sup>1</sup> Given that Spanish is a language with variable subject expression, the subject personal pronoun *tú* can be both present (as in 2) or absent (as in 1). Previous studies examining the eventual connection between subject expression and the deictic vs. impersonal reading of the second person singular point at eventual differences between varieties of Spanish (e.g. Cameron, 1993) or between different conceptualizations of the role of the speaker (Serrano and Aijón Oliva, 2012, 2014). However, this question falls outside the scope of the present paper.

- (1) INTERVIEWER – *Como salmantina, ¿qué piensas de tu ciudad?*  
 ‘As an inhabitant of Salamanca, what do you think of your town?’  
 INFORMANT – *Pues que está muy bien, que está muy bien para venir a verla cuatro días, cinco, seis días, si eres de Madrid, como turismo alternativo.*  
 ‘Well, that it’s very good, it’s very good for coming and seeing it during 4, 5, 6 days if **you are** from Madrid, as alternative tourism.’ (female, 33)
- (2) INTERVIEWER – *¿Y tú estabas más interesada en algunas materias...? [...]*  
 ‘And were you more interested in some subjects...?’ [...]  
 INFORMANT – [...] *Por ejemplo, la Paleografía. Me pareció apasionante. [...]* *Es que **tú tenías** en la mano un papel que era de, del siglo quince o del siglo dieciséis y es que, es que **te** volvía loca.*  
 ‘[...] For instance, Paleography. I found it fascinating. [...] It’s like **you had** in your hand a paper from 15th or 16th century, its like, it’s like it drove **you** crazy.’ (female, 56)

In the present paper, I examine the impersonal uses of 2SG-imp contrasting them with other referential devices<sup>2</sup> with speaker-including and generic uses: the indefinite pronoun *uno*, first person singular and plural and impersonal *se*-constructions (see section 3). These constructions are examined in a corpus consisting of sociolinguistic interviews (Fernández, 2005; see section 2). Since it has been suggested that the frequency of 2SG-imp usage may be increasing (see Vila Pujol, 1987; Hurtado, 2009; Kluge, 2010:1114 and references therein), it could be expected that younger speakers use 2SG-imp more frequently than older speakers, who in turn are expected to opt for other constructions expressing impersonality such as *se* or *uno*, or person forms including the speaker, i.e. first person singular and plural. The use of referential devices is discussed within the perspective of sociolinguistic variation but also as depending on the ways the speakers conceptualize their experiences in the interviews.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, I present the data and methodology. Section 3 discusses the different referential devices examined. The results of the quantitative analysis are presented in section 4. Section 5 discusses the findings, interpreting them in the light of qualitative examination of the interviews. Section 6 summarizes the main findings.

## 2. Data and methodology

The corpus *Habla Culta de Salamanca* (Fernández, 2005) consists of semi-structured interviews with 14 informants (7 males and 7 females) between 30 and 72 years of age, native to the town of Salamanca in the autonomous community of Castile and León in North-Western Spain. In total, the corpus contains approximately 74,000 words. The interviews were carried out by a 40-year old female university teacher. All informants have a high socioeconomic status and have completed university level studies. The main topics of all interviews are the informants’ studies and work experiences and all informants answer questions such as “what made you choose your field of studies?” and “what were your studies like?”. The interviewer poses the questions in the second person singular referring to the addressee. Crucially, all informants can choose to give the answer using a first person singular or any other person form.

The methodology of the present study combines a quantitative and a qualitative approach to the data. In the first stage of the analysis, the referential devices being studied were encoded in the data and quantified in terms of normalized frequencies per speaker. Three sociolinguistic factors were considered in the quantitative analysis: the age and gender of the informants, and their familiarity with the interviewer. Familiarity was estimated by the interviewer on a tripartite scale: 1 = she did not know the informant previously; 2 = she knew the informant superficially (they had been presented to each other and they had briefly discussed before the interview); 3 = she had previously talked with the informant (for example at lunch or at a meeting). None of the informants was a personal friend or colleague of the interviewer (Carmen Fernández, p.c.).

The numerical results were analyzed quantitatively using statistical tests of significance (see section 4); the significance threshold was set at 0.05. In order to interpret the results, the contents of the interviews and the contexts of occurrence of the referential devices were also examined qualitatively, focusing on the devices speakers use to answer the interviewer’s questions (see section 5).

While interviews have been used as data in previous studies on 2SG-imp, the majority of these studies do not focus on the relation of the usage of this grammatical feature and research interviews as a specific textual genre. This issue is addressed directly in Myers and Lampropoulou (2012) who study English 2SG-imp usage in surveys conducted for

<sup>2</sup> The term *referential device* is used as an umbrella term to refer to expressions that can have reference such as proper names, common nouns, and free and bound pronominal elements (Kibrik, 2011). The referential devices discussed in the paper include pronouns and bound person markers on the verbs and combinations of these.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/932464>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/932464>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)