The use of personal deixis as ideological instrument in Spanish political discourse

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In a previous paper at the deixis seminar on June the 3rd (title: 'Yo’, ‘usted’, ‘nosotros’: The use of personal deixis in Spanish political discourse) I presented the results of a quantitative analysis about the use of personal deixis in the discourse of two political candidates to the Spanish government during a TV-debate: the conservative leader against the social democratic prime minister. The focus was on first person pronouns - yo and nosotros - and second person polite pronouns – usted and ustedes.

It was shown that the two candidates have different preferences in the use of deictic pronouns: the prime minister prefers the use of ustedes in order to make accusations to his rival’s party and nosotros for referring to the achievements of his government and political party; the opposition’s candidate prefers the use of usted for making accusations to his opponent and yo for trying to validate his own political program. Another interesting result is that the use of pronouns changes in accordance with the political topic under discussion, entailing that every candidate makes a considerable use of yo when presenting the political topics he is strong on. The conclusion of this analysis displayed that the use of deixis is related to electoral, political and ideological issues about the candidates’ roles in the Spanish political arena.

These results are the starting point of the present paper. Deictic particles are not only considered as elements that contribute to situate linguistic expressions in context –in terms of time, place and person-, but also as adequate particles for the construction of ideologies. In this way, personal deixis contributes to the construction of a figurative world that includes the speakers’ proposals, claims and purposes. This is particularly relevant in political discourse because this contributes to construct argumentation in order to fulfil the politicians’ persuasive goals. This means that deictic elements are a linguistic tool for constructing the specific discourse that is required in a particular setting, in this case the political context. In this way language connects with cognition and culture.

In this paper, extracts from the data will be selected for making a quantitative analysis. The focus will be on the presence of personal deixis:

- in utterances that present opposed ideas (What we make vs. what you don’t make)
- in nominal deixis instead of the expected pronoun (El señor Zapatero instead of Usted)
- when a change of the referent of plural second person pronoun appears in the same sentence (Nosotros, the Spaniards, and nosotros, the politicians)
- when the deictic pronoun is connected to a specific group (Yo and the Spaniards).

The final purpose is to discuss the use of these linguistic elements in the configuration of the politicians’ social roles and identities.
REFERENCES


[http://www.20minutos.es/data/adj/2008/02/26/978.pdf](http://www.20minutos.es/data/adj/2008/02/26/978.pdf)