

Intersubjectivity in a digital genre: the Spanish indefinite pronoun *uno* (“one”) and person deixis in Yahoo Questions&Answers

Marie Rasson (Université catholique de Louvain)

Barbara De Cock (Université catholique de Louvain)

In this paper, we study various mechanisms to create intersubjectivity in a digital genre, namely Yahoo Questions and Answers (YQA). More concretely, we focus on the Spanish indefinite strategy *uno* (“one”) and its interaction with deictic person pronouns. YQA aims to provide assistance to users, who can ask other users questions on topics of all types. The other users respond by giving advice - often by referring to their personal experience - or their opinion on a given issue (Placencia, 2012). YQA is often considered a hybrid genre between dialogic interaction and journalistic publication. The written contributions are not subject to any editorial interference.

We observe in this corpus different functions of *uno*: dissolve the sender and / or receiver (politeness, attenuation), protect the sender or receiver image, address a larger audience, include oneself in the reference, give more evidential weight to the advice (Scheibman 2007), remain vague and create a link between the sender and receiver. We will analyze how these functions interact with person deictic forms in order to construct a subjective or intersubjective effect.

(1) *Cómo observar satélites artificiales*

*(...) La clave es conseguir los horarios en que pasan los satélites por **tu** zona y eso **se** puede averiguar en Heavens-Above: cuando uno se registra tiene que indicar la ciudad en que se realizará la observación (...) espero te sirva*

‘How to observe artificial satellites? (...) The key is to obtain the timetable according to which the satellites pass by your area and that can be checked on Heavens-Above: when one registers, one has to indicate the city where the observation will be realized (...) I hope this helps you.’

(2) *Hoy se acaba en el mundo el agua potable ¿qué harías?*

*Si hoy se acabara el agua pues **me** agarraría de sorpresa ya que uno vive al día y para planear lo que uno haría a futuro pues tendría uno que empezar a cambiar los hábitos.*

‘Today the world runs out of drinking water... What would you do?

If today we ran out of the water, it would catch **me** by surprise, since one lives day-to-day and to plan what one would do in the futures well one would have to start to change habits’.

Specifically, the pronoun *uno*, in interaction with deictic personal pronouns, often generalizes the experience in order to create an intersubjective interpretation (Traugott, 2003), as in (1). However, it can also combine with addresser-reference, as in (2), and thus create a rather subjective interpretation (Benveniste, 1966), starting from a more personal point of view (which may be generalized). In some cases, these two readings seem to be on equal footing, with a reading combining subjective and intersubjective features: the combination of *uno* with

personal forms then allows for connecting the two participants and at the same time generalizing their experience. Thus, the construction of intersubjectivity through both indefinite and person deictic strategies maximally exploits the hybrid nature of the type of discourse produced on Yahoo Question and Answers.

Corpus:

YCCQA : *Yahoo-based Contrastive Corpus of Questions and Answers*.

References:

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