

In this paper, I will look into how politicians adapt their strategies of persuasion according to the context in which they communicate. Indeed, cognitive corpus linguistics research has shown that considerable genre-differences can be found in the ways in which certain linguistic phenomena function (Gries 2013). It has also highlighted that, given the situatedness of cognition (Mandelblit & Zachar 1998: 253), we should adopt an “activity-driven” approach to language in its social context (Bernárdez 2008). More concretely, through a case study of Alejo Vidal-Quadras Roca (right-wing Spanish vice-president of the European Parliament), I will show how politicians adapt their use of person deixis, and generic pronouns (e.g. *uno* ‘one’) and other impersonalizing devices in order to persuade their public through identification and empathy, depending on the political discourse type they engage in and the public they interact with. The corpus consists of Vidal-Quadras’ production in discourse types with different degrees and ways of interaction, namely parliamentary debate, TV- and radio-interviews, his own blog and Twitter-account. I focus on the period of September to May 2014, when Vidal-Quadras publicly attacks his own party (leading to his not being the leader of the 2014 European elections list) and joins a new party. He thus has to manage a shift in political identity and public (members of the own party, supporters of the idea of a new party, Spanish voters in general,...). My research questions concern (i) which variety of deictic and impersonalizing devices Vidal-Quadras uses in order to persuade through identification and empathy and (ii) how these uses vary per discourse type depending on the interactivity and public. The usage-based analysis will be both quantitative (looking into the frequencies of the phenomena) and qualitative (looking into their different uses). In the most interactive spoken genre (interview), the use of person deixis is not only more frequent, as could be expected, but also serves a specific goal, namely clearly positioning Vidal-Quadras, as in (1). In the tweets and blogs, by contrast, person deixis is limited to quotes and hedging.

(1) *Los dirigentes del PP se comportan como socialdemócratas, y yo no estoy afiliado desde hace 30 años a un partido socialdemócrata.* (interview with PeriodistaDigital, 17/10/2013)
 ‘The leaders of the PP behave like social democrats, and I am not affiliated since 30 years to a social democrat party.’

Furthermore, persuasion is realized by means of first person plurals when addressing other party dissidents in discourses and meetings, with whom there is already a shared identity. However, when addressing a broader public in the media, Vidal-Quadras rather uses impersonalizing constructions, e.g. generic and passive *se*-constructions, to persuade, thereby creating empathy and identification with the public in a less direct way than with a 1st person plural group identity.

All in all, the analysis shows that the discourse type and public must be taken into account in a usage-based description of persuasion in political discourses.

References

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