

Paper abstract

Women only? The use of feminine and masculine pronouns for self-reference in Spanish

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Part of the Spanish personal pronoun paradigm allows for a gender distinction, e.g. plural *nosotras* 'we' refers to an all-female group (instead of *nosotros*). In addition, the indefinite pronoun *uno* ('one'), which is often associated with speaker-reference, also has a feminine counterpart *una*. Whereas the grammatical tradition is quite unanimous as to the use of *nosotras* by women, the use of *una*, however, has been described in a more nuanced way, with some authors highlighting regional differences (Butt & Benjamin 1988, NGLE 2010) or differences related to the degree of self-reference (Butt & Benjamin 1988) or expression of the own opinion (NGLE2010:1132).

In this paper, I will analyze the use of both *nosotras* and *una* in contexts where a female identity is particularly at stake, e.g. conversations and debates on women's rights or other topics that are typically associated with women, such as pregnancy. From this analysis, it will become clear that women may refrain from using the feminine forms in view of certain conceptualization choices, namely when the female identity seems less at stake or, crucially, when affiliation with male interlocutors is being sought.

In the second place, I will look into the differences between *nosotras* and *una*, as it seems that the more direct speaker inclusion realized by 1st person plural pronoun *nosotras* makes it less likely for women to refrain from using the feminine form. The vaguer speaker inclusion realized by indefinite *uno/una*, on the contrary, seems to license more easily the use of masculine *uno* for reference to a female speaker or group.

Thus, I will show that the use of feminine pronouns is not in the first place linked to the sex of the speaker, but to the conceptualization she wishes to convey and the discursive effects she wishes to realize with respect to a women only identity and/or the inclusion of male interlocutors.

References

- Butt, John, & Carmen Benjamin. 1988. *A new reference grammar of modern Spanish*. London: Arnold.
- NGLE: Real Academia Española & Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española. 2010. *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española*. Madrid: Espasa.