

## The endless creation of second person pronouns in Spanish

Spanish is known for exhibiting a very complex system of second person pronouns. Its paradigm envisages up to four pronouns (*tú, vos, usted, sumerced*) in singular and two (*vosotros, ustedes*) in plural. The complexity not only relies on the selection of either pronoun, but also on the agreement that each of them induces. As a result, it is possible to attest *tú* with *vos* verbal morphology; *vos* with *tú* verbal morphology; *vos* with its own verbal morphology in coexistence with *tú* verbal desinences; *usted* with *tú* and *vos* verbal morphology as well as *ustedes* with *vosotros* verbal morphology. Moreover, clitics and possessives can also oscillate between different agreement patterns and even a single country can be characterised by mixing several of the previous alternatives.

The academic literature has researched on this topic for decades, without still pinpointing the grammatical reasons that trigger so much variation and the mixture of agreement patterns. In contrast, scholars have devoted themselves to describing the geographical distribution of all these pronouns, the sociolinguistic factors or the pragmatic variables that sometimes play a role in their usage. This presentation aims to put forth that all the disagreements that have always existed and that still emerge nowadays respond to a very specific grammatical behaviour. This has to do with the appearance of a new pronoun that tries to oust another one that is gradually losing the pragmatic value it has had. However, this substitution is gradual by definition and shows that the new pronoun eliminates the other one by establishing itself first in a prepositional phrase, then as a topic and finally reinterpreted as a subject. Hence, there is always a time in which both pronouns coexist until one of them disappears.

The replacement of a pronoun by a new one can entail further rearrangements if none of them shares agreement patterns. When this is the case, the new pronoun not only has to transit through the hierarchy prepositional phrase > topic > subject until deleting the new pronoun, but it also has to extend its own agreement features to the detriment of the agreement features that referred to the previous pronoun. Again, this process is gradual and follows a specific continuum: subject > reflexive / verb > direct object > indirect object > possessive. Therefore, there is always a period of time in which two agreements coexist, one of which is ousting the oldest one.

The multiple options in Spanish both in Europe and America regarding its pronouns of address and its agreement patterns can be understood by a gradual process of substitution, in which a new pronoun tries to eliminate a pre-existing one. The differences that are attested dialectally simply depict the stage in which this change is undergoing either with respect to the stressed form or with the agreement features of the new pronoun. In addition, this behaviour is not exclusive to Spanish but can also justify the similar complexity that arises in Portuguese.