

# The emergence and history of *tuteo*, *voseo* and *ustedeo*

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The second person pronouns in Spanish have exhibited numerous variants along its history, not only regarding its stressed forms, but also the agreement that emerges in the inflecting elements that anchor these stressed pronouns. Despite the quantity of studies carried out about *voseo*, *tuteo* and *ustedeo*, none of them has argued what grammatical reasons underlie for so much variation, since they have focused on pragmatic and sociolinguistic patterns without going any further than a mere description. In this article, I aim to account for the linguistic features that have triggered all variants and person disagreements, for every case has undergone the same grammatical process.

**Keywords:** topicalisation, second person pronouns, forms of address, Spanish, person agreement

## 1. Introduction

The second person pronouns in the history of the Spanish language have been characterised by multiple shifts, some of which have prompted disagreements between the form of address and its syntactic elements. Currently, there is much variation to this respect, not only in Peninsular Spanish, but mainly in the Hispanic American dialects, as Table 1 illustrates.

Table 1 shows that, unlike the clear distinction in the standard varieties, dialect particularities mix pronouns and, as I will demonstrate, inflections. The greatest variation emerges in the singular, but this does not only occur in the pronoun, since the verbal morphology that refers to *voseo* can have an own *voseante* inflection or can be construed with *tuteo* desinences. Moreover, the *voseante* inflection splits in several allomorphs: some of which exhibit a diphthong in the desinence and others a monophthong. The selection of either of them is also constrained to each standard or vernacular variety and it is not rare to attest that a

Table 1. Paradigm of current American and European Spanish varieties

	T singular	V singular	T plural	V plural
Standard Peninsular Spanish	Tú + 2SG	Usted + 3SG	Vosotros + 2PL	Ustedes + 3PL
South-western Spain / Canary islands	Tú + 2SG	Usted + 3SG	Ustedes + 2PL / 3PL	Ustedes + 2PL / 3PL
Standard Central America / River Plate	Vos + 2SG	Usted + 3SG	Ustedes + 3PL	Ustedes + 3PL
Dialect Central America / River Plate	Vos + 2SG / Tú + 2SG / Usted + 3SG	Usted + 3SG	Ustedes + 3PL	Ustedes + 3PL
Rest of standard American varieties	Tú + 2SG	Usted + 3SG	Ustedes + 3PL	Ustedes + 3PL
Rest of dialect American varieties	Tú + 2SG / Vos + 2SG / Usted + 3SG	Usted + 3SG	Ustedes + 3PL	Ustedes + 3PL

given dialect prefers some tenses with a *voseante* morphology and some with a *tuteante* one. Also, it is not uncommon to document the coexistence of a number of *voseante* allomorphs for the same tense within a specific country. Likewise, *tú* has also been attested with *voseo* verbal morphology. Some of the mixtures that Table 1 suggests can be observed in (1)–(3).

- (1) Ustedes vais de viaje (western Andalusia)  
 You.3PL go.2PL.PRS.IND. of travel  
 ('You are going on a trip')
- (2) Vos te sentís enfermo (River Plate)  
 You REFL.TUT. feel.2SG.VOS.PRS.IND. ill  
 ('You are feeling ill')
- (3) Tú te licenciái el año que viene (Chile)  
 You REFL.TUT. graduate.2SG.VOS.PRS.IND. the year that comes  
 ('You are getting your degree next year')

Sentences (1)–(3) show different cases of disagreement between the subject pronoun and other inflecting elements that refer to it. In (1), the verb is construed in 2PL despite the pronoun being syntactically 3PL; in (2), even though the verb is *voseante*, the clitic is *tuteante*; in (3), on the contrary, the verb exhibits 2PL desinence though its inductor pronoun is 2SG. I will not repeat here all the distribution that can be found, since it is perfectly detailed in Fontanella de Weinberg (1999), but irrespective of the standard or vernacular feature of the abovementioned examples, the literature has failed to theoretically argue the syn-

tactic behaviour that underlies the incongruences I have pointed out. Until now, authors have devoted themselves to describing the pronominal alternatives, their combination with others and what type of speakers may resort to either of them. In addition, all the literature agrees in pinpointing that no current American country is consistent in its second person pronouns paradigm, for all of them exhibit areas that contravene their standard or show agreement mixtures that are not necessarily attested nationwide. In some countries, there are several variants for the *voseante* morphology in the verb, but again we do not rely on in-depth research that can argue the grammatical reason for so much variation.

As a result, in this article I aim to put forward the grammatical behaviour that can justify the disagreements witnessed all throughout the Hispanic world in their second person pronouns. In order to do so, I will pinpoint that *tuteo*, *voseo* and *ustedeo* have undergone a topicalisation process that is not completed, and this is why there are person mismatches among the syntactic elements that refer to any of these forms of address. Therefore, this paper is divided as follows: in (2), I discuss the theoretical arguments that justify the disagreements between subject and the rest of elements or in part of the inflection; in (3), I describe the corpus and methodology I have employed; in (4), I show and exemplify the diachrony of the pronouns of address in the Hispanic world, in line with the mentioned theory; in (5), I synthesise the conclusions and in (6), I present the bibliographic references I have resorted to.

## 2. Theoretical framework

My theory stems from the fact that the disagreements attested nowadays and those that have been documented along history in the Spanish pronouns of address and their inflecting elements is based upon a concatenation of deep grammatical processes. This complexity is the result of two concomitant phenomena regarding address: its semantics and syntax usually contradict each other, and its pragmatic value swings as the belief of society varies.

The former is inherent in the creation of pronouns of second person, according to Heine & Song (2011). These authors pinpoint that second persons usually come from an entity that denotes plurality, from a noun phrase, from an intensifier and, occasionally, from other minor sources. This fact triggers a plural form to be reinterpreted as singular (it is the case of *vos*) or a pronoun stemming from a noun phrase to agree in third person despite its addressing a second person (it is the case of *usted* / *ustedes*). Second person pronouns are specially problematic in this sense, for they convey social deixis and, therefore, politeness. This particularity prompts the coexistence of more than a single form for a same grammatical

number, but they differ in the diaphasic reference. The likelihood for second person pronouns to outnumber first or third person pronouns is mainly attested in singular rather than in plural, since the latter is inclined to syncretism (Siewierska 2004).

However, I have advanced that second person pronouns are usually subject to the social and pragmatic oscillations within a country; therefore, they are unstable *per se*. This is the case of *vos* in Spanish, which, from connoting formality, came to be evaluated as informal and, in Spain, as offensive, until it disappeared in this country although it remained as a pronoun of proximity in Hispanic America (De Jonge & Nieuwenhuijsen 2006). This is also the case of *você* in Portuguese, which transited from being formal into being a substitute for *tu* in most of Brazil and, as a consequence, becoming a resource for informal and intimate contexts (Lopes et al. 2020). Romance languages are not the only ones, since *you* in English worked as *vous* in French until it spread for any second person and stopped connoting politeness (Raumolin-Brunberg 2005). *Ghi* underwent the same path in Dutch, since its versatility promoted the use of noun phrases such as *Uwe Edelheid* ('your nobility'), until its grammaticalisation in *U*. Today, *ghi* is informal, while *U* covers the spectrum of formality (Daan 1990).

All these changes are the result of socio-pragmatic upheavals. Without going any further, Brown & Gilman (1960) attribute the pragmatic solidarity within the family and among friends to the radical change that the western world experienced as a result of the French Revolution. From that moment on, society began to accept pragmatic solidarity (with its conventions, its pronouns, its nominal forms) in more contexts in order to fulfil the idea of egalitarianism, democracy and freedom. The increase of informal pronouns to contexts previously conceived as deferential or hierarchical is common in the western world, as demonstrated by Benigni & Bates (1977) for Italy, Paulston (1984) for Scandinavia, Molina Martos (2020) for Spain or Lara Bermejo & Guilherme (2021) for Portugal. This is also the case in most of America, as Rigatuso (1992) testifies for Argentina or Lopes (2019) for Brazil. In all these places, the increasing pragmatic solidarity has come along with industrialisation, the exodus from the countryside to the city, and the birth of the middle class.

## 2.1 Topicalisation

Socio-pragmatic factors are crucial in the rearrangement of forms of address, but as for their grammatical behaviour, the establishment of a form or a pronoun that is ousting an existing one entails a readjustment that includes topicalisation and gradualness. This process envisages two alternatives: either the substitution of one form by another that shares exactly the same agreement features, or the replace-

ment of one form by another whose inflecting features are not identical. The former option arises in the appearance and subsequent establishment of the pronoun *vosotros* over *vós* in the 14th century.

García et al. (1990) and Lara Bermejo (2019) point out that *vosotros* did not emerge at the same time in all the syntactic contexts likely to appear. As it is often the case in any linguistic change, the innovation gradually takes over the contexts of the one it wants to eliminate. In the present case, García et al. (1990) claim that *vosotros* first occurred inside a prepositional phrase and, later, it jumped to the subject (4)–(5).

- (4) “Ay amigas sseñoras!” dixo el vno dellos, “e ¿por que vos amanesçio mal dia por la nuestra venida? ca sabe Dios que nos non cuydamos fazer enojo a ninguno nin ala vuestra señora nin a **vosotras**, nin somos venidos a esta tierra por fazer enojo a ninguno [...]” *Libro del Caballero Zifar*-M 182.27–183.8. .

(De Jonge & Nieuwenhuijsen 2006: 1.611)

(‘Ah, my friend ladies -said one of them- and why is it a bad day because of our coming? God knows we do not intend to angry anybody, not your lady, not you all, for we have not come to this land to angry anybody’)

- (5) “Yo vos lo diré”, dixo el Cauallero Amigo. “Aqui çerca esta vn castillo del enpeador e vayamosnos alla; ca yo trayo cartas de guia, e soy bien çierto que nos acogeran alli e nos faran mucho plazer”. “Vayamos”, dixo el mercader, “pero catad que non pierda yo lo que di **por vosotros**”. Zifar, 493.21–25

(Nieuwenhuijsen 2006: 952)

(‘I will tell you -said the friend knight- Here nearby there is the emperor’s castle, so let’s go there. I am carrying guiding letters and I am certain that they will host us there and they will please us very much. Let’s go -the merchant said- but beware that I don’t lose what I gave for you all’)

The reason is simple: since Spanish is a *pro drop* language, the probability for a stressed pronoun to appear is greater in a prepositional phrase. Moreover, Lara Bermejo (2019) remarks the importance of the topic in the continuum of this diffusion. To summarise, the generalisation of *vosotros* to the detriment of *vós* was subject to the following continuum: prepositional phrase > topic > subject.

The replacement of one form by another one, whose agreement features are not the same, entails an extra rearrangement: the extension of the new grammatical agreement throughout the entire paradigm. In the case of second person pronouns, the topical phase is always the prelude to their generalisation, since they tend to function as vocatives and, therefore, to be located in the left periphery and in a domain outside the sentence. The topic is the aboutness, what will be dealt with in the speech (Givón 1975). It is an element that usually arises at the beginning of the discourse and its purpose is to warn the interlocutor about what is

going to be said as well as to remind or change the matter that is being discussed. The topic frequently coincides with the subject, but this is not always the case. The conditions for topics to be considered as such are their independence with respect to the sentence (which is phonetically perceived via a prosodic pause and, orthographically, with a comma), as well as the obligation to retrieve their reference within the sentence itself. However, the anaphora that alludes to the topic is not obliged to agree with it.

- (6) Yo, no me gusta el chocolate  
I.NOM. no 1SG.DAT. like.3SG.PRS. the chocolate  
(‘I don’t like chocolate’)
- (7) Yo, me da igual lo que digan  
I.NOM. 1SG.DAT. give.3SG.PRS. same what say.3PL.PRS.SUBJ  
(‘I don’t care what they say’)

In (6)–(7), the topic is *yo* and it is recovered within the sentence by the pronoun *me* that, although it agrees in person and number, does not agree in case, since *yo* is nominative and *me* is dative.

As it is usually located at the beginning of the speech, the topic is often reinterpreted as the subject of the sentence, so it is inclined to become such. But before moving from topic to subject, it needs to undergo an intermediate phase in which it is neither topic nor subject, albeit it possesses characteristics of the two. For example, it is not outside the sentence anymore, the prosodic pause (and therefore the comma) disappears, but it does not induce its agreement yet and may still be referenced by an anaphora that is not forced to agree. Finally, speakers end up reanalysing this element, making it a full subject. In this last stage, the newly subject completely displaces the previous one and establishes its agreement features to the rest of the syntactic elements that anchor it.

The abovementioned process is quite common cross-linguistically. Li & Thompson (1975) affirm that subjects are basically reanalysed topics and we rely on several historical instances: normative third person pronouns in today’s Italian are the result of a process of topicalisation that took place in the first half of the Middle Ages. Rohlf’s (1968) and Ernst et al. (2008) state that *lui*, *lei* and *loro* (oblique) began to coexist with the forms *egli*, *ella*, *essi*, *esse* (nominative) which were the normative subject pronouns.

- (8) Lui, egli sa ogni cosa  
He.OBL. he.NOM. know.3SG.PRS. each thing  
(‘He knows it all’)

With time, this construction became more and more frequent, making the old subject a clitic.

- (9) Lui e' sa ogni cosa  
 He.OBL. he.NOM. know.3SG.PRS. each thing  
 ('He knows it all')

Lastly, the clitic disappeared and the oblique pronoun ended up being the subject, as it is still nowadays.

- (10) Lui sa ogni cosa  
 He.NOM. know.3SG.PRS. each thing  
 ('He knows it all')

However, despite the fact that every topical structure foresees an anaphora that recovers the dislocated referent, this does not always appear in the production of the discourse. To understand this possibility, it is necessary to resort to the concept of the silent or covert element, which is a constituent that is part of the internal structure of the sentence, but not expressed phonetically. The subject in nearly all the Romance languages is usually silent or covert, since, although it is part of every sentence, it is not necessarily explicit, since these varieties are *pro drop*. If a same phrase from French, Italian and Spanish is compared, it is possible to observe silent elements not related to the subject (11)–(13).

- (11) Sur la table, je n'y ai rien mis  
 On the table, I no PART. have nothing put  
 ('I haven't put anything on the table')
- (12) Sul tavolo, non c'ho messo niente  
 On +the table, no PART. have put nothing  
 ('I haven't put anything on the table')
- (13) En la mesa no he puesto nada  
 On the table, no have put nothing  
 ('I haven't put anything on the table')

The locative pronoun, necessary in French and Italian, is non-existent in Spanish, although it did arise in medieval times. According to the theory that I argue, Spanish maintains it, but it is not expressed phonetically. Sometimes the anaphora is orally optional for certain grammatical persons, but not for others. Despite the obligatoriness of preverbal subjects in French, Kayne (2005) notes the particularity of the postponed subjects in relative sentences (14)–(15).

- (14) La fille à qui a tout dit Jean-Jacques  
 The girl to who have.3SG.PRS.IND. all say.PCP. Jean-Jacques  
 ('The girl to whom Jean Jacques has said everything')

- (15) Le criminel qu'ont                                  condamné    trois juges  
The criminal that have.3PL.PRS.IND. condemn.PCP. three judges  
(‘The criminal who three judges have condemned’)

He also states that third person subject clitics are not mandatory (16)–(17) whereas the rest are (18)–(19):

- (16) Lui (,)                  (il)                          a                                  téléphoné  
3SG.OBL.MASC. (3SG.NOM.MASC.) have.3SG.PRS.IND. phone.PCP.  
(‘He has phoned’)
- (17) Eux (,) (ils)                                  ont                                  téléphoné  
3PL.OBL. (3PL.NOM.MASC.) have.3PL.PRS.IND. phone.PCP.  
(‘They have phoned’)
- (18) Moi,    \*(j’)                  ai                                  téléphoné  
1SG.OBL. (1SG.NOM.) have.1SG.PRS.IND. phone.PCP.  
(‘I have phoned’)
- (19) Toi,    \*(tu)                  as                                  téléphoné  
2SG.OBL. (2SG.NOM.) have.2SG.PRS.IND. phone.PCP.  
(‘You have phoned’)

For this author, both cases are characterised by having a silent or covert element that is not made phonologically, but which does remain in the internal structure of the sentence. In current Spanish, there are cases of this type, in which an element that is not phonetically expressed acts as the true subject of the sentence (20)–(21).

- (20) Los estudiantes somos                          jóvenes  
The students    be.1SG.PRS.IND. young  
(‘We students are young’)
- (21) La gente somos                          muy curiosos  
The people be.1PL.PRS.IND. very curious  
(‘We the people are very curious’)

Spanish speakers quickly realise that these types of sequences do not usually include a prosodic pause between the noun phrase and the verb that refers to it. In these cases, the topic is in the intermediate phase in which it is not completely a topic, but neither does it exhibit all the characteristics of a subject. In (20)–(21), *the students* and *the people* are not topics anymore because they are inserted in the sentence, but they are not the subject because the true subject that establishes the agreement is *we*, although it is elided. This intermediate stage does not always occur with the omission of the anaphora. Again, back to the development of the



pronouns *lui*, *lei* and *loro* at the expense of *egli*, *essa*, *essi*, it is observed that, in a certain period of this development, both pronouns coexisted within the same sentence (although the old usage had lost phonic weight) (8)–(10).

As a result, the sequence of a Spanish pronoun of address plus an inflecting element that does not agree with such a pronoun suggests a change in progress. In this case, the pronoun of address is a topic or in the intermediate stage in which it is both a topic and a subject. For example, *tú* plus a *voseante* verb indicates a change based on the substitution of *vos* by *tú*. Therefore, the disagreements attested all throughout reveal the phase in which the change is undergoing. However, as already stated, if the new pronoun does not share the same agreement features as that it intends to oust, the agreement of the new pronoun spreads gradually depending on a series of factors: the location of the agreement with respect to the address as well as the grammatical case and the syntactic function.

## 2.2 Double agreement

The contradiction that emerges in an element that induces two agreements has been studied by Corbett (2006). The preference for one or the other depends, according to Corbett (2006), on the status of the element that receives the agreement in the hierarchy of (i), as well as on the position that such an element has with respect to the constituent that induces that agreement.

- (i) Attributive > predicate > relative pronoun > personal pronoun

According to this author, any element that prompts two agreements (semantic and syntactic) will tend to expand one of them in all its inflectional paradigm following the continuum of (i) (syntactic from left rightwards and semantic from right leftwards). The problem with Corbett's theory (2006) is that he only studies the behaviour of number and gender, but not that of person. Person disagreements triggered by certain pronouns of address follow the findings of this author, but also fulfil those argued by Wechsler & Zlatic (2003). According to them, agreement can be *index* or *concord*. While the former obeys the agreement established between subject and predicate and, therefore, is governed by the parameters of person and number (although, depending on the language, also case or gender), the latter type of agreement is constrained within the noun phrase and follows the parameters of gender, case and number, but not person.

One of the main disagreements attested in the Spanish pronouns of address applies to objects. Not only does *voseo* have *tuteo* objects, but 3PL *ustedes* is usually anchored by 2PL objects in Andalusia. According to the abovementioned authors, this happens because personal pronouns are the last ones to adopt a new agree-

ment, and they are freer to adapt to the features induced by the address, for objects do not obey the pattern between subject and predicate (*index* agreement).

### 2.3 Grammatical case

Until now, I have mainly dealt with disagreements between subject pronouns and verb, but when a new form establishes itself in the paradigm to the detriment of another and, in addition, exhibits a different person agreement from the previous one, the rest of inflectional elements do not immediately agree with the new form. The cross-linguistic behaviour indicates that linguistic phenomena that obey the dynamics of grammatical person usually follow a continuum that is specified in (ii).

(ii) Nominative > accusative > dative > ablative > genitive

In accordance with Pinkster (1985 and 1990), the usual order in Latin regarding its cases followed the pattern in (ii). But this continuum can also have a version based on the syntactic function (iii).

(iii) Subject > direct object > indirect object > oblique

Blake (2004) assures that the ability of a language to make passive constructions is subject to this continuum. Thus, English can make passives with an indirect object, while Spanish only with direct objects. Keenan & Comrie (1977) point out that the ability to relativise an element depends on case. Thus, there are languages capable of relativising only the subject, while others do so with the subject and the direct object, and others with these two functions plus the indirect object. However, there is no language able to relativise the indirect object and not the direct and the subject. Comrie (1976 and 1989) argues that causation in Turkish follows this hierarchy in the addition of valencies. For example, if another valency is added to an intransitive sentence, the old subject becomes the direct object and the new valency, the subject; if another is added, the direct object becomes the indirect object, the old subject turns itself into the direct object and the new valency into the subject, and so on. Therefore, the possibility of creating passive or causative sentences follow the hierarchies of case and syntactic function. This is why objects and possessives are the most reluctant elements to agree with a new pronoun of address.

### 2.4 Summary

The evolution of pronouns of address in the Spanish-speaking world is subject to all these grammatical restrictions: topicalisation, syntax versus semantics, index

versus concord, as well as grammatical case or syntactic function. The data that I will provide below, as well as its comparison with other languages, will show that the historical and current variation that is witnessed in Spanish is due to a topicalisation process that has not always been completed, and whose pronominal element induces a double agreement that tends to extend the syntactic one. This spreads following the opposition *index* and *concord*, always fulfilling the hierarchies proposed by Blake (2004) regarding case and syntactic function.

### 3. Corpus and methodology

Pronouns of address and their inflectional elements are one of the most complex grammatical features to find in speech. The problem with historical data lies, among other things, in its quantification. The corpora that are available usually make use of literary texts or excessively formal documentation. As Calderón Campos (2010) has shown, the use of *vos* in Peninsular Spanish had already vanished in the 18th century and, nevertheless, literary works or other non-oralising sources continued to give examples of *vos* associated with a determined social class or as a stereotyped reminiscence that did not correspond to reality. One of the most obvious case of contradiction between literary and oralising texts is the evolution of *vuestra merced* ('your mercy') into *usted*. Until recently, the evolution proposed by Pla Cárceles (1923) enjoyed acceptance; this author offered numerous variants in the grammaticalisation process that resulted in *usted*, thanks to his research of literary and other texts. However, García Godoy (2015, 2016) has discovered that all those variants did not coincide with reality and that they were only stereotyped or literary strategies. This author empirically demonstrates thanks to oral documents, such as letters and witness statements, that, in the evolution of *vuestra merced* into a pronoun, two alternatives were produced: *vusted* and *usted*.

The problem with oralising texts is, again, the paucity of data, especially with regard to pronouns of address, since the second person is the least likely to appear. Likewise, the emergence *per se* of a certain pronoun or an agreement associated with it does not determine its eligibility in the quantification, since it is extremely important to analyse other parameters, such as the sender, the recipient, the intention, and so on. Moreover, it is necessary to add the problem of the corpus where they appear: the mere quantification can lead to misunderstandings, since it is not possible to know if the extract to be analysed has been manipulated by the editor, it is faithful to the original... All these details make it necessary for the diachronic study to be qualitative, as many other authors have already shown for the same phenomenon.

The data, therefore, that I use in this work to grammatically analyse the existing variation in the Spanish-speaking world come from consolidated studies that I will cite in due course (all of them based on qualitative analyses for the stated reasons), as well as other recently carried out that do foresee the quantitative analysis and that underpin the conclusions of the qualitative studies. Thus, I will demonstrate that the grammatical reality that exists responds to the same pattern (topicalisation). The lack of systematicity that the academic bibliography has given to this matter is due to the fact that the enormous variation that exists has been studied separately, without there having been an overall linguistic study that addresses all the varieties, all the chronological periods, the sociolinguistic factors as well as the social and pragmatic changes. All these details have been crucial and explain the enormous variation attested in the present.

Consequently, I will divide the analysis into two very marked chronological periods: the one that runs up to the end of the 18th century versus the one that runs through the 1800s to the present day. The reason for this taxonomy is found precisely in the socio-pragmatic and political events that take place in the western world and, specifically, in the Spanish-speaking area in terms of the conception of courtesy, language policy and territorial relations. There is consensus in establishing that the Industrial Revolution together with the French Revolution mark a turning point in the conception of politeness and its strategies, including pronouns. It is also in the nineteenth century when standard varieties are fostered and the prestige stops being local or regional and starts being national. This new standard variety was imposed by the elite through the media and schooling. Finally, the 19th century witnessed the independence of the Hispanic territories, which gradually shaped their own national elite and their own standard variety depending on the fashion and prestige that each country considered. It is precisely at this time when dialect differences take hold and the enormous variation originates.

#### **4. Diachrony of pronouns of address**

As already depicted, this section will be divided into two parts: the period of time prior to the 1800's, and the period of time from the 19th century onwards. This split is based on the fact that the 19th century marks the beginning of standardisation, the American independences and a new socio-pragmatic model that promotes the dialect and grammatical variety that is currently documented.

#### 4.1 The pronouns of address up to 1800

Medieval Spanish exhibited a model analogous to current French, inheriting the Latin system (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Pronouns of address and agreement in Medieval Spanish

	Informality	Formality
Singular	Tú + 2SG	Vós + 2PL
Plural	Vós + 2PL	Vós + 2PL

In contrast to *tú* plus 2SG, *vós* plus 2PL was useful for the rest of contexts. As a result, this pronoun was both polyvalent and syncretic. The universalisation of this form caused its gradual devaluation in pragmatic terms, since, in the late Middle Ages, there is evidence that its deferential value was not so high and it was necessary to specify a nominal form that clarified the pragmatic relationship between the interlocutors.

- (22) Catad, **señor**, que yo como al señor cardenal os hablo sy se me responde de otra forma soy engañado, y quedo vuestro seruidor (Al alcaide de los Donzales, *Epistolario*, I, p. 232, 1504–1506) (Calderón Campos 2000: 482)  
 (‘Look, sir, that I am speaking to you as I speak to sir cardinal, if I am replied in another way I am deceived, and I lay at your service’)
- (23) Magnífico **señor, hermano**: Yo bien sé que no es menester poner os seso, que tenés mucho, pero no me an parescido bien las palabras de vuestra carta, y perdonadme **señor**, ni conformes al tiempo ni a quien **vos señor** soys, ni a la lealtad que deveys tener (A D. Íñigo Manrique, *Epistolario*, I, p. 210, 1504–1506). (Calderón Campos 2000: 483)  
 (‘Magnificent sir, brother, I know very well that it is not necessary to make you wise, since you already are, but the words of your letter haven’t seemed very well to me and, forgive me, sir, do not cede to time what you sir are nor to the loyalty you must have’)

The paradigm depicted in Table 2 prompted two deep changes: the emergence of a new 2PL pronoun to replace the polyvalence of *vós*, and the arising of new forms of address in order to fulfil the degree of politeness that *vós* had gradually lost.

In the former case, the lexicalisation of *vosotros* settled as a substitute for *vós* informal plural, first in a prepositional phrase, later as a topic and finally also as a subject, as explained above. This gradual change also occurred in Catalan, French and Italian, as shown by Lara Bermejo (2019). Specifically, the French and Italian dialects show that *vous autres* and *voi altri* are geographically diffused over a

larger area when they work as topics and in the prepositional domain, rather than when they appear as subjects. As Heine & Song (2011) stated, the creation of this new pronoun occurs thanks to the use of an indefinite.

The generalisation of *vosotros* did not entail a new grammatical agreement, since it shared the same features as *vós* possessed, but the pragmatic devaluation of the latter produced the creation of new forms of courtesy for the sphere of formality or distance, made up systematically by a noun phrase, that envisaged a possessive plus an abstract noun: *vuestra merced* ('your mercy'), *vuestra señoría* ('your lordship'), *vuestra excelencia* ('your excellence'), etc., the former being the one that specialised as the unmarked form of politeness. This same strategy repeated throughout the Ibero-Romance spectrum and, as different investigations about Spanish and Portuguese show, the appearance of the noun phrase was initially more frequent in the prepositional phrase and as a vocative or topic.

- (24) Magnífico señor: El rey y la reyna, nuestros señores, escriben a **vuestra merced** que mande venir aquí çiertas lanças suyas, segund sus altezas me escriven, y porque en la parte de Marbella ay neçesidad de gente luego y tambien porque no trabajen los escuderos hasta aqui, os suplico, señor (Al alcaide de Los Donzeles, *Epistolario*, I, pp. 5–6, 1504–1506). (Calderón Campos 2000: 482)  
 ('Magnificent sir: the king and the queen, our sirs, write to your mercy to order your lances to come, as their majesties tell me, and because in the area of Marbella there is need of people and so that the squires do not work up to here, I beg you, sir')
- (25) Yo soy el que tengo de besar las manos **de vuestra merçed** por todo lo que dize, porque es super abundancia de cortesía y lo que yo digo es debda devida a Dios y a su alteza y a vos, señor. Y en lo que mandays que diga mi paresçer por viejo y experimentado, en verdad, señor, sy supiese que dezir que syn mandamiento lo dixese, porque pura esto me sobra voluntad. Solamente sabré pedirlos, señor, por merçed que encomendés este negoçio a nuestro (Al alcaide de los donzeles, *Epistolario* II, pp. 452–453, 1504–1506)  
 (Calderón Campos 2000: 482)  
 ('I am the one to kiss the hands of your mercy for all you say, because it is quite polite and what I say is due to God, your highness and to you, sir. And as you want me to say my opinion because I am old and experienced, really, sir, if I knew what to say, I did, because I have willingness left. I will only ask you, sir, to make this business ours')

The Examples (24)–(25) demonstrate the coexistence of *vuestra merced* with elements inflected in 2PL and, occasionally, with the recovery even of *vós*, in that early stage in which both forms co-occur before one prevails over the other. Moreover, as explained in previous paragraphs, the conditions that Corbett (2006)

adduced for the greater or lesser propensity to agree are completely fulfilled, since when the element that receives the agreement is located further away from its inductor or is even in another sentence, then it is more likely to adopt a semantic agreement, compared to the one that is constructed just after the address, which swings towards the syntactic agreement. It should be noted the inclination of objects to adopt the semantic agreement (2PL) or the one that represents the form that is being displaced, since it supports the theories defended in this work: they do not mean an *index* agreement (they are not constrained to the relation subject-verb), they are more inclined to semantic agreement (the personal pronoun is the most prone to this), they have greater independence than the verb, which is governed by the subject, and they are almost at the end of the hierarchy proposed by Blake (2004), since they are the last elements to adapt to a change just before the possessive.

The contexts described in (24)–(25) assume that *vuestra merced* was in one of these two stages: (a) the address is not the subject, but the topic; (b) the address is not the subject, but neither does it work as a topic anymore, since it has characteristics of the two constituents. In both cases, the pronoun *vós* functions as a silent or covert element, that is, it continues to be the true subject, which is not made explicit because of the *pro drop* character of Spanish. The plausibility for two pronouns to refer to the same entity, albeit with a different syntactic status, has been demonstrated for Italian (see Kayne 2003 for reflexivity in this language), but also for Spanish regarding the pronoun *ustedes* (Lara Bermejo 2016, 2020), although I will return to the behaviour of this pronoun later.

The topical character of *vuestra merced* and its coexistence with *vós* has been investigated by Hammermüller (2010), who claims that *vuestra merced* started to emerge as an apposition, and he puts forth a continuum in its syntactic configuration (26).

- (26) ¿Vós<sub>2PL</sub> cantáis<sub>2PL</sub>, vuestra merced<sub>3SG</sub>? / ¿Vuestra merced<sub>3SG</sub>, vós<sub>2PL</sub> cantáis<sub>2PL</sub>? >  
 ¿vuestra merced<sub>3SG</sub>, cantáis<sub>2PL</sub>? > ¿vuestra merced<sub>3SG</sub> canta<sub>3SG</sub>? > ¿vuesa merced<sub>3SG</sub> canta<sub>3SG</sub>? > ¿usted<sub>3SG</sub> canta<sub>3SG</sub>?

According to him, the early appearances of the address were governed by its peripheral character, as a reinforcement or clarification of the level of courtesy, since *vós* no longer stood as a deferential form. As it arises as a topic, *vuestra merced* is by definition an extra-sentence element and, therefore, does not participate in the internal rules of the sentence to which it is juxtaposed.

The peculiarity of *vuestra merced* lies in its nominal character. Therefore, when the expression of a subject pronoun was necessary for topical continuity or contrastive purposes, the only possibility that existed was *vós*. This nuance is important, because it cannot be taken for granted that Spanish had a pronomi-

nal opposition *tú* / *vós-usted* and *vosotros-ustedes* until the end of the 17th century (De Jonge & Nieuwenhuijsen 2006). Up to that time, Spanish had three pronouns (*tú*, *vós* and *vosotros*) and countless noun phrases, the most common of which was *vuestra(s) merced(es)*. The pronominalisation of *vuestra(s) merced(es)* in *usted* and *ustedes* is late, as a consequence of a typical grammaticalisation process triggered by the source of this pronoun: the noun phrase (Siewierska 2004; Heine & Song 2011).

The changes explained above provoked an ulterior one regarding *vos*. Its pragmatic devaluation in the late Middle Ages caused it to be nearly equivalent to the pronoun *tú*, with which it gradually entered into competition for informal and intimate contexts in the singular. The reversion that it experienced in its consideration produced its coexistence with *tú* sometimes for the same contexts and, other times, for slightly more deferential situations, but never at the height of *vuestra merced*. The coexistence of both pronouns was normal on both sides of the Atlantic until the eighteenth century, since in Spain it disappeared in the 1700's, though it remained longer in very few rural enclaves. Nevertheless, in the late Middle Ages and during much of the Modern Age, the two pronouns coexist, although *vos* exhibits complexity in its verbal inflection.

Furthermore, the verbal ending of 2PL (anchoring *vos* and *vosotros*) also experienced several changes. From the late Middle Ages until the 18th century, the 2PL desinence gradually lost the intervocalic /d/ that characterised it (Girón Alconchel 1996). As a result, the juxtaposition of the remaining two vocals produced two results: the diphthongation of the verbal ending and the monophthongation. So, verbs such as *amades* or *tenedes* came to be produced as *amaes*, *amais* or *amás* and *tenéis* or *tenés*. The loss of 2PL /d/ made some tenses be homophone with those of *tú*, so that only the imperative, the present indicative and the present subjunctive could disambiguate this homophony.

All these particularities were exported to America in the Modern Age: the devaluation of *vos* with its coexistence with *tú*; the multiple monophthong and diphthong variants of 2PL due to the fall of the intervocalic /d/ and its homophony to a large extent with the *tutaente* inflection; the establishment of the pronoun *vosotros*; the generalisation of *vuestra(s) merced(es)* and its subsequent grammaticalisation in *usted(es)*. Research in this regard indicates that both Spain and Hispanic America exhibited the same variation in their pronouns and that it was the local or regional elite of each area that imposed the prestigious model.

- (27) Y me dixieron que **estáuades** muy flaca y descontenta (letter 635, Mexico, 1568)  
 (Bentivoglio 2003: 180)  
 ('And I was told that you were very thin and unhappy')



- (28) Porque donde **vos** estáis, yo no haré falta (letter 643, Mexico, 1583)  
 (Bentivoglio 2003: 181)  
 ('Because where you are, I will not be necessary')
- (29) Como **gastéis** los tributos yo sabré castigaros y enseñaros a que **seáis** puntual  
 llevaldo a la cárcel  
 (From mayor Juan Camilo Hoyos to Joseph, indigenous, 1669 Cundiyo-  
 bace High Plateau, Díaz Collazos 2015: 148)  
 ('If you spend the taxes, I will know how to punish you and to teach you in  
 due locked in prison')
- (30) **Andá dale** la queja a tu marido, que es donde **debeis** yr  
 (From mother to daughter, 1797, South-western Andes, Díaz Collazos  
 2015: 150)  
 ('Go and give the complaint to your husband, that's where you must go')

The studies by Díaz Collazos (2015) for Colombia, Bentivoglio (2003) for Mexico or Anipa (2001) for the entire Hispanic American world certify that this was the case. It is possible to observe a variant according to the local prestige regarding the morphology of the verb: monophthong or diphthong. This coexistence and choice based upon what the local elite marked has also conditioned the greater attachment to the pronoun *tú* or *vos*. In any case, the studies that have been carried out have shown that the option towards *tuteo* has been associated with areas more closely linked to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as with upper and urban classes. Díaz Collazos (2015) herself argues this in her research on *voseo* in the history of Colombia. Her findings prove that the use of *vos* has been correlated with these sociolinguistic variables and has been more diffused in areas of the Andes that are geographically more isolated.

In summary, the period from the Middle Ages to the 18th century means the same dynamics throughout the Spanish-speaking spectrum. On the one hand, the devaluation of *vos* as a term of formality and deference makes it enter in competition with *tú*. Instead, *vosotros* is generalised as a plural pronoun of informal and intimate 2PL, and the phrase *vuestra(s) merced(es)* is universalised for formality. However, the fall of the intervocalic /d/ produces a series of variants associated with 2PL that oscillate between monophthongation and diphthongation, and a homophony with those of 2SG associated with *tú*, except in three very defined verb tenses: the imperative, the present indicative and the present subjunctive. Likewise, *vuestra(s) merced(es)* works as a noun phrase and it is not until the late 1600's when it is pronominalised, entering into complementarity with *tú* / *vos* in the singular, and *vosotros* in the plural.

Although the emergence of *vosotros* was gradual in syntax, it did not involve any further grammatical readjustment, but the alternative *vuestra(s) merced(es)*

implied a different agreement rather than that of *vos*. Historical data show its appearance first in prepositional environments or as vocative / topic, without its emergence entailing the generalisation of the third person in the inflectional elements that alluded to the same referent. Its reanalysis as a pronoun in line with its grammaticalisation process imposed the third person in the entire paradigm, but this did not occur until the 18th century, as De Jonge & Nieuwenhuijsen (2006) explain.

## 4.2 Contemporary age

The 18th century is witness of two events in the Hispanic world: the generalisation of *usted(es)* as a pronoun, leaving behind its nominal stage, and the rising of pragmatic solidarity at the end of the 1700's. Nonetheless, both sides of the Atlantic began to gradually differentiate from each other more and more as a result of the standardisation processes and the American independences. In order to assess every pronoun, below I discuss the development of *vos*, *tú*, *usted*, *vosotros* and *ustedes* in this order.

### 4.2.1 *Voseo*

The pronoun *vos* as informal survived with higher or lesser acceptance all throughout America, until it became standard in nearly all of Central America and the River Plate. In the rest of countries, it still exists at a dialect level and with different sociolinguistic considerations. Nevertheless, the spread of *vos* at the expense of *tú* mainly in the areas where it was turned into standard implied disagreements that may exist even today. The example of Argentina is paradigmatic.

Its standardisation happened in Buenos Aires, where *voseo* established itself with monophthongation in its inflection. The early attestations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remark its coexistence with *tuteo*. As it deals with a linguistic use that is displacing another, the first stage is characterised by the coexistence of both options and an increase of *vos* in prepositional phrases and, to a lesser extent, as a subject or between topic and subject. Moreover, the emergence of *vos* in prepositional phrases does not imply its recovery as a subject, since the production of *tú* was possible (31)–(32).

- (31) **Seras** toda la vida un cornudo y los **cargaras** cuantas beses llo quiera y tengo derecho en cuanto llo esido primero que **vos** cornudo [...] por una muger que asido enbra mia, como **te** lo pruebo cuantas beses **tu quieras** [...] a unque **tu te abras** desengañado [Anonymous to Máximo Santos, c. 1880]

(Bertolotti 2015: 395–398)

(‘You will always be a cuckolded and you will be as long as I want to, since I was first cuckolded by a woman who has been my female, as I can show you as many times as you wish, though you may be disillusioned’)

- (32) Maximo **tu sabes** que yo no tengo mas amparo que **vos** que soy una pobre viuda y faltandome **tu** que va a hacer de mi [Letter from María B. de Santos to her son Máximo, 11th February 1887] (Bertolotti 2015: 394–395)  
 (‘Maximo, you know I have no more support than yours, that I am a poor widow and if you are not here, I don’t know what it’s going to be out of me’)

As can be observed, the dynamics is the same as that of *vuestra merced* or that of *vosotros*, with an extra difficulty, which is that neither *vos* nor *tú* share traits of agreement, at least to a large extent. I will not repeat here what I have already defended previously, but Excerpts (31)–(32) show that occurrences of this type simply reflect the stage in which *vos* is trying to oust *tú* as a subject.

The frequency of *vos* causes its reinterpretation as a subject, but before this status, it undergoes through an intermediate phase, in which *vos* still coexists with *tú*, which is the true subject and that may not be explicit because Spanish is *pro drop* (33)–(34).

- (33) Por lo q<sup>e</sup> **vos previenes** no le he entregado la carta dirigida a el [Romana J. López de Anaya to Juan José de Anchorena, 20th May 1808]  
 (Fontanella de Weinberg 1987: 113)  
 (‘As you warned, I haven’t delivered the letter addressed to him’)
- (34) En orden al mulato Mig<sup>l</sup> no le **exijas** el docum<sup>to</sup> de venta si el no **te** lo da voluntariam<sup>te</sup>, pero tampoco le **entregues vos** medio r<sup>l</sup> a cuenta de su valor... [A. G. N., VII-4-1-4. Letter from Tomás to Nicolás de Anchorena. Potosí, 10th September 1813] (Fontanella de Weinberg 1971: 503)  
 (‘It is an order not to demand the sale document if he does not give it to you willingly, but do not deliver anything for its worth’)

In (33)–(34), *vos* is expressed right after the verb, participating in the sentence, but it does not function as the subject of the verbs that its agreement supposedly induces. In these examples, *tú* is silent or covert, it is not made explicit although it remains in the internal structure of the sentence. With time, *vos* becomes the true subject, the pronoun *tú* decays and it is the moment in which *vos* begins to induce its own agreement. According to Blake (2004), the first elements that the *voseante* morphology should assume are the reflexive and the verb, followed by the object clitics and, finally, the possessive. However, this has not been the case, because *voseo per se* has jumped to the verb, but it has not extended to the reflexive. Before arguing this exception, I will focus on the verb.

Fontanella de Weinberg (1987) and Bertolotti (2015), regardless of whether *voseo* is in the River Plate or in another American area, highlight that the *voseante* morphology, whether diphthong or monophthong, is first born in the imperative and later spreads to the present indicative. These two verb tenses are the ones that first present *voseo*, followed by the present subjunctive and the past indefinite and / or future, although the latter three exhibit their own particularities (for more information, see Fontanella de Weinberg 1999).

Therefore, the tenses that are univocally *voseante* correspond to the imperative, the present indicative and, depending on the area, the present subjunctive, the indefinite and the future. The extension of *voseo* throughout Hispanic America is reflected in (iv).

- (iv) Stressed pronoun (topic / prepositional phrase > subject) > imperative > present indicative > others

The continuum of (iv) indicates that, if there is *voseo* in the present indicative, there is necessarily in the imperative and, of course, *vos* has established itself as a stressed pronoun in all its syntactic contexts: topic, prepositional phrase and subject. Therefore, the greater or lesser diffusion of the *voseante* paradigm in the different Hispanic American areas is due to the fact that not all of them have spread *voseo* in all the stages shown in the continuum. While the typical *voseo* of River Plate exhibits an evolution that reaches the end of the hierarchy, in other areas it is still possible to witness the phase in which *voseo* is only pronominal, but has not jumped to the verb, or is uniquely established in the imperative, but not in the phases to its right. Consequently, the *voseante* uneven distribution that seems to occur throughout the continent in general and within some countries in particular is subordinated, first of all, to this fact. Historical data underpin this, since, for example, in the Argentinian case, the monophthong standard *voseo* settles first in Buenos Aires and afterwards floods the entire country in a typical wave pattern. Thus, *voseo* exhibited in its verbal inflectional evolution greater progress in Buenos Aires in the 19th century rather than in the city of Santiago del Estero or Corrientes, where there was still a *tuteante* inflection in the verb. While Buenos Aires had already advanced in the continuum of (iv), the other localities were still in a previous phase. Observe Figure 1.

Figure 1 summarises the development of *voseo* in Hispanic America in an abstract way. As a general rule, there are three exclusively *voseante* zones in the continent: one of them presents *vos* as a subject pronoun and in a prepositional phrase, but it is combined with *tuteante* verbs (35)–(37).

- (35) Vos eres                                    estudiante  
You be.2SG.TUT.PRS.IND. student  
(‘You are a student’)

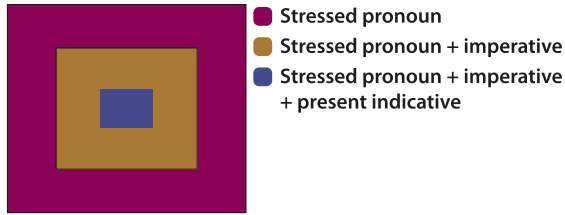


Figure 1. Grammatical extension of *voseo*

(36) Voy con vos  
 Go.1SG.PRS.IND. with you  
 ('I am going with you')

(37) Ven aquí  
 Come.tut.IMP. here  
 ('Come here')

A second area exhibits *vos* not only as a stressed pronoun, but it already possesses the imperative in such an inflection, but this does not apply to the present indicative (38)–(40).

(38) Vos eres estudiante  
 You be.2SG.TUT.PRS.IND. student  
 ('You are a student')

(39) Voy con vos  
 Go.1SG.PRS.IND. with you  
 ('I am going with you')

(40) Vení aquí  
 Come.vos.IMP. here  
 ('Come here')

Lastly, there is a third area where *voseo* has generalised even in the present (41)–(43).

(41) Vos sos / soi / sois estudiante  
 You be.2SG.VOS.PRS.IND. student  
 ('You are a student')

(42) Voy con vos  
 Go.1SG.PRS.IND. with you  
 ('I am going with you')

- (43) Vení                      aquí  
 Come.vos.IMP. here  
 ('Come here')

Figure 1 shows a typical wave diffusion, in which the epicentre or focus is the one where the three innovations occur simultaneously. The periphery of the focus only exhibits two waves and the periphery of the periphery has only received the onset of *voseo*. The three regions mean different chronological moments, since the focus implies that *voseo* settled earlier there than in the other regions. Thus, if a particular centre generalised *voseo* in 1830, it only occurred in the focus, but the other two areas still predominantly showed *tuteo*. In 1850, the focus not only presented *vos* but it was characterised by the paradigm described in (38)–(40). In contrast, in 1850, the peripheral area presented the phase of (35)–(37), while the periphery of the periphery remained in *tuteo*. In 1870, the epicentre presented the phase of (41)–(43), its periphery that of (38)–(40) and the periphery of the periphery that of (35)–(37). Figure 1 can be applied to the development of *voseo* anywhere in Hispanic America.

In the case of Argentina, at first, *voseo* is anchored in Buenos Aires and, therefore, in its surrounding area, as demonstrated by Fontanella de Weinberg (1987). With time, *voseo* spreads to the Buenos Aires periphery, reaching provinces such as Corrientes, whose homonymous capital had not experienced the same trend toward the choice of *voseo* as Buenos Aires did. Abadía de Quant (1992) compares the different stages of both cities and highlights that the *voseante* verbal morphology was more advanced in Buenos Aires than in Corrientes in the same period of time, so the selection of *vos* and its grammatical agreement is later than in the country's capital. Once Corrientes generalises *voseo*, Buenos Aires has already developed it in the imperative. However, the establishment of *vos* at the expense of *tú* has not yet reached other areas further away from the epicentre, which, according to Di Tullio (2010), present *tuteo* in that same chronological cut or, at least, still alternate it with *vos* in a phase in which both options fight to unseat their rival. After another period of time, *voseo* is established in more provinces, such as Santiago del Estero or Tucumán, either because there were vestiges of *tuteo* or they presented a type of *voseo* morphology that did not correspond to the standard promoted by Buenos Aires. At the same time, Corrientes and other analogous areas have already generalised *voseo* in the imperative, but Buenos Aires has advanced in the phenomenon by including *voseo* in the present indicative.

Consequently, the divergences in the verbal inflection within the same country where *voseo* is standard are due to the fact that those that do not correspond to the standard present stages in which such a morphology was the common one in that area within the local elite or regional. The divergences that occur in countries

where *voseo* is not standard are a consequence of the fact that each area exhibits the pattern that has been prestigious or marked by the local or regional elite. However, *voseo* in any of its expressions maintains *tuteante* morphology in clitics and possessives, again marking the distinction of case and syntactic function hierarchies defined by Blake (2004), since the objects and the possessive have not adopted the desinence. It must be emphasised that the homophony that the inflection in clitics and possessive would have with the pronoun *vosotros*, has caused the maintenance of *te* and *tuyo* as grammatical options of *voseo* for the functions that express such constituents, even in reflexives.

As for the Iberian Peninsula, *voseo* had already disappeared by the 1700's and the attestations that emerged during the 18th century were either archaic strategies or church rhetoric (Lara Bermejo 2022). Moreover, *vos* had been formal or semi-formal, decaying until offensive, but it never substituted *tú* as informal or intimate. This can also be observed in the archaic usages of *vos* in the 1700's, since it is always employed to mark distance rather than to establish proximity.

#### 4.2.2 *Tuteo*

The linguistic behaviour that I put forth for *voseo* is repeated for *tuteo* in those areas where the use of *tú* has replaced *vos* (the case of Chile) or in *voseante* countries in certain contexts, such as the Uruguayan upper class. Observe (44)–(45).

- (44) Si **tú** me **decís** eso, por algo será [female university student, from Montevideo, young, formal context, 2001] (Bertolotti & Coll 2006: 37)  
(‘If you tell me that, there must be some reasons’)
- (45) ¿**Tú** **sabís** lo que yo pensaba cuando a mi papá lo homenajeban y lo aplaudían? [6th December 2005, a student at the psychiatrist friend of hers] (Torrejón 2010: 761)  
(‘Do you know what I thought when my dad was paid tribute and applauded?’)

The constructions of (44)–(45) again suggest the same path. The phrases indicate that this *tuteo* is an innovation and tries to impose itself on a *voseo* that was given previously. While in the upper pages *voseo* diffused at the expense of *tuteo*, (44)–(45) reveal the expansion of *tuteo* to the detriment of *voseo*.

Díaz Collazos (2015) provides clues precisely in this regard in her study of *voseo* in Colombia. This author reproduces a nineteenth-century extract in which a speaker tries to address another person, although its variety is characterised by using *vos* (46).

- (46) **Tú** **tenés** razón [Antioquía, *Frutos*, 1896] (Díaz Collazos 2015: 192)  
(‘You are right’)

The researcher acknowledges that this type of *tuteo* with *voeante* morphology was typical of people who, accustomed to *voseo*, did not control the *tuteante* verbal paradigm, so when they wanted to express *tuteo*, it was simply produced through the stressed pronoun, without the verb being inflected in *tuteante* morphology. This class of occurrences is extremely important, because it corroborates the linguistic stages that I have defended in the substitution of a pronoun that tries to oust another with which it does not share agreement features, since the first step is the unique choice of the address, without further syntactic repercussions.

The first hint that this is indeed the phenomenon underlying this type of sequence arises in Example (47) from Lima.

- (47) Sierto que **haceis** mal de no venir luego a esta ciudad a la lixera, pues **os** he dicho que ynporta mucho asi para nuestros negocios como para otras cosas del repartimiento de Hananguanca. Y asi ynporta, hermano, que **te vengais** luego que bea esta carta sin detenerse en cosa alguna para que aca se remedien muchas cosas [Lima 1642. Letter from Juan Alaya to his brother]

(Rivarola 2000: 53–54)

(‘I think you don’t do well in not coming to this city, since it is very important for our business and the delivery to Hananguanca. So, it is important, brother, that you come as soon as you see this letter without stopping for any reason so that many things can find remedy’)

The pressure for *tuteo* marked by the Peruvian capital led to the deletion of *voseo* in the upper and literate layers, but that change did not occur overnight. The fragment (47) indicates that *voseo* was quite established and that *tuteo* is a use that was implemented over *voseo*. Again, the stressed pronoun arises (although covert), but the other constituents do not agree because Example (47) reflects the most incipient phase, in which *tú* is topical (or it is in an intermediate phase) and the true pronoun is *vos*. In addition, it follows the hierarchy of Blake (2004), since the reflexive has adapted to *tuteo*, while the object pronoun still remains in *voseo*: the functions that refer to the subject or the nominative come first before those anchoring the object.

The adoption of *tuteo* in an area further away from the Iberian Peninsula, as was the case of Chile, has been attributed to the influence of Lima as a centre of prestige. Thus, *tuteo* is recent in this country, gradually displacing *voseo*. Torrejón (1986) insists in a certain sense on this fact, by admitting that the upper and urban class promoted *tuteo*, a circumstance that relegated *voseo* that occurs today as a social marker that arises especially in the centre of the country. However, the insistent attempts towards *tuteo* had not fully settled in the 1980’s, as the production of the same hybridisations was common. According to what Torrejón (1986) investigated, there is *tuteo* with a *voeante* verb, as in (48).



- (48) ¿Cómo **estái**, qué **contái**? / **Mira tú**, no me **digái** na, mejor. / ¿**Tenís** tiempo ahora? / **Entra**, no más, no **te quedís** ahí fuera. / ¿**Hai** visto al Moncho por ahí? / ¿**Cuándo llegastes**? / ¿**Vierai** lo buena que estuvo la película! / ¿Si **supierai** lo bien que lo pasamos! (Torrejón 1986: 680)  
(‘How are you? What’s up? / Look, don’t tell me anything / Do you have time now? / Come in, don’t stay outside / Have you seen Moncho out there? / When did you arrive? / How good the film was! / If you knew how fun we had!’)

The excerpt from (48) perfectly reflects that the pronoun appears as a vocative after an imperative, which is, in turn, the only verb form that exhibits a *tuteante* inflection, as does the case of *voseo*. The rest of the verb tenses are *voseante* and arise even in the same oral production, juxtaposed to the *tuteante* treatment, if they belong to a different phrase. The low prestige of *voseo* is evident, as remarked by Torrejón (2010), who argues that it is clearly in decline. Moreover, in later works, this author accounts for the insertion of *tú* in the prepositional phrase and also in the present indicative (49)–(50).

- (49) ¡Yo **te** quiero a **ti**, a **ti!** / Pero, yo soy un muerto, y los muertos no se quieren, se dejan tranquilos, se espera que se pudran. / No **estái** muerto, no **estái** muerto. No **eres** un muerto [5th December 2005, M tries to avoid D, her boyfriend, to commit suicide by throwing himself into the lake] (Torrejón 2010: 763)  
(‘I want you, you / But I am a dead man, and the dead are not wished, they are left alone, they are expected to get rotten / You are not dead, you are not dead. You are not a dead man’)
- (50) Y yo le digo: estoy aquí para venir a **apoyarte**, y voy a estar **contigo** todo el tiempo que **querái** [*Buenos días a todos*, 6th December 2005, a dancer paraphrasing during an interview a conversation with her boyfriend, who is in a rehabilitation clinic] (Torrejón 2010: 761)  
(‘And I tell him: I am here to support you, and I am going to be with you all the time you want to’)

As can be seen in the study by Torrejón (2010), it is the present and the imperative that are the first to yield to *tuteo* in the verb. The examples that appear in Uruguay resemble those of Chile too. Bertolotti (2015) points out that Uruguay also underwent a trend towards *tuteo* in the first years after independence and that this inclination was typical of urban and upper-class speakers who, undoubtedly, wanted to imitate European fashions. *Voseo*, reserved for the rural or low-stratum level, ended up imposing itself as a consequence of the massive migration to the city (as in Argentina), but those attempts for *tuteo* still remain in the same speaker profile that has always promoted it: the upper or very cultivated class. However, as *voseo* has fully settled and represents the standard of that country, the implementation

of the pronoun *tú* is an innovation that, currently, only appears in the abovementioned sociolinguistic profile and, grammatically speaking, as a topic, vocative or in a prepositional phrase. It is, without a doubt, an incipient use, immersed in an early phase, in which the true subject continues to be *vos*, which is why the verb acquires *voseante* morphology despite using the stressed pronoun *tú*.

In the Iberian Peninsula, *tú* was always the informal and intimate pronoun, in spite of the devaluation of *vos*. As a result, *tuteo* was the norm for informal contexts all throughout without disagreements.

#### 4.2.3 *Ustedeo*

The *ustedeo* linguistic dynamics replicates the same behaviour that I have offered for *voseo* and *tuteo*. Its implementation as a formula of intimacy or informality at the expense of *vos* or *tú* begins with hybridisations in the verb and in the same stressed pronoun, as well as in clitics and possessive. Observe some examples dated in 2007 (51)–(53).

- (51) Gracias por las fotos, me acuerdo de la mayoría de los lugares y por cierto el burro hablando de orejas, **vos** también **estás** bastante flaco, **cuídese** y **coma** bastante a ver si **engorda** para las celebraciones del 17 de mayo  
(Quesada Pacheco 2010: 667)  
(‘Thank you for the photos, I remember most places and, by the way, you are also too thin, take care and eat more to put on weight for the celebrations on May 17’)
- (52) Las fotos están lo más bonitas, **te** lo agradezco, a mí me parece que **usted cumple** años el domingo, eso creo. Espero que la **pases** muy bien.  
(Quesada Pacheco 2010: 667)  
(‘The photos are beautiful, I thank you, I think you have your birthday on Sunday, I hope you will have fun’)
- (53) **Vea usted**. Y yo me he tomado el trabajo de tratar de hacerme la encontradiza con **usted**. Con razón no me salía. Lo que me **cuentas** me deja tan sorprendida que se me olvidaron mis preguntas.  
(Quesada Pacheco 2010: 667)  
(‘See, I have tried to come across you. I see why it did not work. What you tell me leaves me so surprised that I forgot my questions’)

The Excerpts (51)–(53), from emails in the spectrum of solidarity, evidence precisely the entire linguistic framework to which a change is subjected based on a pronoun that tries to displace another, with which it does not share the same agreement traits. The explicitness of *usted* favours the third person, which occurs above all in the imperative, while the recovery of the entity in a different sentence is done through *vos*. This means that *usted* alternates with *vos* and that *usted* has not yet established itself as a subject or in the entire verbal paradigm in those

speakers who have already reanalysed *usted* almost as such. This is why clitics still have a *tuteante* and non-*ustedeante* morphology and, it is necessary to remind that clitics and possessives attached to *vos* are *tuteante* because the *voseante* ones are homophonous to the pronoun *vosotros*.

#### 4.2.4 *Vosotros*

In Spain, *vosotros* underwent different paths in the Contemporary Age: either it established itself as the informal pronoun in plural or it disappeared from the paradigm, favouring the unique usage of *ustedes* for both formal and informal contexts. In the former case, the fashion for pragmatic solidarity that happened in the 1700's and, mainly, along the 19th century, triggered the spread of informal strategies to further contexts than earlier. Consequently, the plural *vosotros* widened its diaphasic spectrum and gradually increased in use. This was led by the Madrid upper class and then adopted elsewhere within the country, except in western Andalusia and the Canary Islands. As Lara Bermejo (2022) explains, the Canary Islands widespread *ustedes* as the single plural pronoun, because it had been the default one and were not so pressured to adopt the new prestige from Madrid. As regards western Andalusia, the upper class adapted to the new trend towards pragmatic solidarity and opposed *vosotros* and *ustedes*, whereas the lower class gradually diffused *ustedes*, resulting in disagreements as will be discussed below.

The increase of pragmatic solidarity that took place at the end of the 18th century, but above all throughout the 19th century, and which caused the progressive increase of *vosotros* as an informal and intimate pronoun in Spain, did not arrive in America. In that continent, the unmarked pronoun *ustedes* ended up becoming generalised for any interlocution as it was the default form in almost all contexts. As already explained, the fact that it is plural causes a greater propensity for syncretism and, therefore, for a single pronominal strategy to address a plurality of interlocutors (Siewierska 2004). The few contexts in which *vosotros* could appear were reduced to reverential situations in which the interlocutor held a position above their audience. This triggered the pragmatic reversion of this pronoun, since it was reinterpreted as a form of great reverence and formality. Consequently, *vosotros* was limited to ecclesiastical language (the priest who addresses the parishioners), the politician (the deputy who addresses the chamber or citizens) and the military (the member who harangues his subordinates) (54). This same fact occurred in European Portuguese (Cintra 1972).

- (54) Esta es la oportunidad, señores diputados, de tocar una cuestión que es casi seguro que suscitará entre **vosotros**... [President of the Republic, 2nd December 1916] (Vázquez Laslop 2010: 635)

(‘This is the opportunity, sir deputies, to address a matter that is sure to draw your attention’)

The testimonies of the early twentieth century still account for the employment of *vosotros* in these contexts, but these same situations have been replaced by the universalisation of *ustedes* over the years as Vázquez Laslop (2010) testifies, putting the case of Mexico as a paradigm of an American trend.

However, there is a single element of the *vosotros* paradigm that remains: the possessive *vuestro*. The use of this constituent is Pan-American, according to the research of Vázquez Laslop (2010); Dankel & Gutiérrez Maté (2020) or Bertolotti (2007), and it is reserved for contexts in which it is intended to be formal. But, unlike the usage of *vosotros* or its inflection, which was restricted to the church, the army and politics, *vuestro* arises in a broader communication spectrum and can even be used for a single speaker. The particularity is not only its versatility in singular or plural, or its marked formal character, but the fact that it is the last element that has remained in the *vosotros* paradigm, while the others have been fading due to the diffusion of *ustedes*. Once again, the hierarchies of Blake (2004) are fulfilled, since the possessive or genitive is the phase that later adopts a change (in this case, its disappearance), as does the theory of Wechsler & Zlatic (2003), since the possessive is a *concord* element and not *index*.

#### 4.2.5 *Ustedes*

The success of *ustedes* as a grammaticalisation meant the real opposition in the plural by means of two pronouns: *vosotros* and *ustedes*, since prior to this date, *ustedes* was conveyed by a noun phrase stemming from *vuestras mercedes*. However, in the 18th century, the usage of *ustedes* envisaged, at least throughout Peninsular Spanish, oscillation in its agreement pattern regarding the verb and other inflecting elements. So is demonstrated by Fernández Martín (2012) thanks to correspondence and witness testimonies, as observed in (55)–(56).

(55) De ver a **ustedes** tan buenos me alegro mucho; esta noche mejor diversión os tengo que el revesino [*Oposición*, vv.318–321, 1773] (Fernández Martín 2012: 158)  
(‘I am very happy to see you so well; tonight I promise you better entertainment’)

(56) Señores, que Dios guarde a **ostéees** [...] que me jueugo llegando a **veros** [*Jesu-Christo*, 320, 1784] (Fernández Martín 2012: 355)  
(‘Sirs, may God take care of you, that I am looking forward to seeing you’)

Instances (55)–(56) point out the possibility for *ustedes* to induce both a semantic and a syntactic agreement. This fact was generalised and tended towards the spreading of 3PL with reference to *ustedes* in opposition to the 2PL with reference

to *vosotros*. However, as has been said, western Andalusia preferred to spread *ustedes* at the expense of the bipartite opposition and this entailed a grammatical rearrangement that included disagreements. The study by Fernández Martín (2012) demonstrates a higher preference for *ustedes* in prepositional phrases or in a position outside the sentence domain, as well as the maintenance of the 2PL inflection in objects or possessives much more than with the verb, as happened with *vuestra merced* over *vós*. Even in the verbal desinence, this author notes implicational phases, for the first tense to adopt the 3PL is the imperative, as in *voseo* or *tuteo*.

The case of *ustedes* shows that the appearance of a new pronoun does not imply the extension of all its agreement pattern to the entire inflectional paradigm that depends on it, but this gradually adopts it following the rules that I have discussed in the theoretical framework. The co-appearance of *ustedes* with verbs of 2PL implies that *ustedes* is not the subject, but the topic or *ustedes* is in the intermediate phase in which *ustedes* has characteristics of both without being either in their entirety. Its reanalysis as a true subject forces its agreement to extend throughout the paradigm: firstly, the verb and the reflexive, since the *index* concordance has to be satisfied and the predicate is an element more prone to syntactic agreement than another constituent, such as an object pronoun. Likewise, the verb and the reflexive refer to the subject, which is usually conveyed by the nominative (at least, in inflectional languages) and, as proposed by Blake (2004), the nominative and, where appropriate, the subject syntactic function are the first elements to adopt a change that obeys the grammatical person pattern.

The particularity of western Andalusia with *ustedes* has not only been studied by Fernández Martín (2012), but has been repeatedly commented on in Mondéjar (1994) or Fontanella de Weinberg (1999). However, neither of them has analysed the grammatical behaviour in depth, limiting themselves to sociolinguistic or descriptive issues. The diachronic work that establishes the grammatical evolution in the generalisation of such a pronoun is found in Lara Bermejo (2018), who determines that the universalisation of *ustedes* is due to a process of topicalisation, within which it is possible to find phases in which both pronouns coexist. In fact, Real Academia Española (2009) affirms that, precisely in western Andalusia, it is possible to register the explicit concatenation of both forms, as exemplified in (57).

- (57) **Ustedes vosotros** no la                      conocéis  
 You3PL. you.2PL. no acc.3SG.FEM. know.2PL.PRS.IND.  
 ('You don't know her')

This type of sequence has also arisen in the analysis of Lara Bermejo (2020), albeit constrained to other syntactic contexts (58)–(60).

- (58) **Se os queréis ir**  
REFL.3PL. REFL.2PL. want.2PL.PRS.IND. go.INF  
(‘You want to leave’)
- (59) **Intentaréis entrar**  
Try.3PL+2PL.PST.IND. enter.INF.  
(‘You tried to come in’)
- (60) **Me abrieréis los grifos**  
DAT.1SG. open.3PL+2PL.PST.IND. the taps  
(‘You opened my taps’)

The occurrences reproduced in (58)–(60) irrefutably attest the coexistence of two forms that struggle to survive, one of which aspires to become a subject. The expression in (58)–(60) indicates that *ustedes* is in the stage, where it is both topic and subject, but neither at the same time. It is subject insofar as it participates in the sentence and not in its periphery, but it continues with its topical status for having to be referenced by *vosotros* (sometimes explicit and, most of the time, not), which is the one that still imposes the agreement features. The fluctuation that *ustedes* undergoes in this phase is such that there is even the concatenation of the two grammatical persons in clitics and verbal ending. The thesis that I develop is even more reinforced when verifying that the literal order in which the constituents appear is systematically that of 3PL + 2PL, but not the opposite, which is a sign of the peripheral character with which *ustedes* was born, since *ustedes* is the first to occur in speech.

The diachronic study by Lara Bermejo (2018) empirically shows that the elimination of *vosotros* occurs in the Cádiz-Seville axis, that is, in the area that has enjoyed its own prestige until the arrival of standardisation and that has had more links with America. With time, *ustedes* has been reinterpreted as a subject and, depending on the Andalusian area, the extension of the 3PL is more or less advanced. In any case, this author indicates that, once *ustedes* has turned itself a full subject, the 3PL syntactic agreement extends to all the elements that refer to this entity, following the hierarchy in (v).

- (v) Stressed pronoun > reflexive > verb > direct object > indirect object > possessive

In accordance with the continuum, *ustedes* is born first as a stressed pronoun and its 3PL feature jumps first to the reflexive, then to the verb and later it settles in the object pronouns, the direct being the first. Ultimately, the possessive adopts the 3PL, so if the possessive inflects in 3PL, all the elements that refer to this form do so too. If the hierarchy of (v) is materialised into different examples, the following evolutionary stages emerge.

**Stage 1**

- (61) Ustedes no os<sub>2PL</sub> acordáis<sub>2PL</sub> de nada ('You don't remember anything')
- (62) Os<sub>2PL</sub> vi [a ustedes] ayer ('I saw you yesterday')
- (63) Os<sub>2PL</sub> dije [a ustedes] que venía hoy ('I told you I was coming today')
- (64) Vuestros<sub>2PL</sub> hijos [de ustedes] están en el colegio ('Your children are at school')

**Stage 2**

- (65) Ustedes no se<sub>3PL</sub> acordáis<sub>2PL</sub> de nada ('You don't remember anything')
- (66) Os<sub>2PL</sub> vi [a ustedes] ayer ('I saw you yesterday')
- (67) Os<sub>2PL</sub> dije [a ustedes] que venía hoy ('I told you I was coming today')
- (68) Vuestros<sub>2PL</sub> hijos [de ustedes] están en el colegio ('Your children are at school')

**Stage 3**

- (69) Ustedes no se<sub>3PL</sub> acuerdan<sub>3PL</sub> de nada ('You don't remember anything')
- (70) Os<sub>2PL</sub> vi [a ustedes] ayer ('I saw you yesterday')
- (71) Os<sub>2PL</sub> dije [a ustedes] que venía hoy ('I told you I was coming today')
- (72) Vuestros<sub>2PL</sub> hijos [de ustedes] están en el colegio ('Your children are at school')

**Stage 4**

- (73) Ustedes no se<sub>3PL</sub> acuerdan<sub>3PL</sub> de nada ('You don't remember anything')
- (74) Los<sub>3PL</sub> vi [a ustedes] ayer ('I saw you yesterday')
- (75) Os<sub>2PL</sub> dije [a ustedes] que venía hoy ('I told you I was coming today')
- (76) Vuestros<sub>2PL</sub> hijos [de ustedes] están en el colegio ('Your children are at school')

**Stage 5**

- (77) Ustedes no se<sub>3PL</sub> acuerdan<sub>3PL</sub> de nada ('You don't remember anything')
- (78) Los<sub>3PL</sub> vi [a ustedes] ayer ('I saw you yesterday')
- (79) Les<sub>3PL</sub> dije [a ustedes] que venía hoy ('I told you I was coming today')
- (80) Vuestros<sub>2PL</sub> hijos [de ustedes] están en el colegio ('Your children are at school')

**Stage 6**

- (81) Ustedes no se<sub>3PL</sub> acuerdan<sub>3PL</sub> de nada ('You don't remember anything')

- (82) Los<sub>3PL</sub> vi [a ustedes] ayer ('I saw you yesterday')
- (83) Les<sub>3PL</sub> dije [a ustedes] que venía hoy ('I told you I was coming today')
- (84) Sus<sub>3PL</sub> hijos [de ustedes] están en el colegio ('Your children are at school')

Note that the directionality of this hierarchy fully coincides with the theoretical postulates that I support in this article. First, it strictly follows Blake's (2004) continuum, and obeys an *index* agreement in the first place and then *concord*. Likewise, the constituents that are least dependent on their inductor are also the most inclined to semantic agreement.

Even speakers of the same language, but of different varieties, journey the same grammatical path. Lara Bermejo (2018b) studies Ecuadorians living in Spain and shows that those who tend to adapt to the Peninsular system of address with the opposition *vosotros-ustedes* do so progressively, being the pronoun *vosotros* the first element to appear, although immediately followed by morphology of 3PL and many times retrieved in its stressed version through the form *ustedes*. Moreover, as in the case of the eighteenth-century Andalusian, the first tense to adapt to the change is the imperative, followed by the present indicative.

## 5. Conclusions

The history of pronouns of address in the Hispanic world has been characterised by great variation, as a consequence of socio-pragmatic upheavals. After a similar distribution on both sides of the Atlantic during the Modern Age, the Contemporary Age has witnessed the complex system that still exists. The processes of standardisation, stemming from independences and the concept of the nation-state, as well as geolinguistic and sociolinguistic variables have played a fundamental role in an era in which urbanisation, industrialisation and the rise of the middle class fostered pragmatic solidarity.

The current reality is the result of a gradual path of linguistic change produced by topicalisation processes, in which a new pronoun located in the left periphery tries to oust another that has stopped connoting the same level of politeness. However, the pronouns that aspire to become subjects do not share the same agreement features as those they want to displace, so a process of reanalysis takes place involving the coexistence of the two forms, sometimes explicitly, although almost always implicitly. Consequently, the apparent disagreements that have occurred and that are still attested respond to the fact that the verbal, clitic or possessive inflection does not refer to the explicit treatment (which is the topic), but to the one that appears elided as Spanish is *pro drop*. Once the topic has been



reinterpreted as a subject, the person inflection begins to spread in all the elements, following a series of steps that I have explained and that are repeated cross-linguistically in numerous phenomena.

Nonetheless, before the American independences and the establishment of the standard varieties, each local elite imposed not only the prestige of one address or another, but also the inflectional morphology of the verb. During the nineteenth century, each country imposed in its norm the option of *tuteo* or *voseo* and, within the latter, the monophthong or diphthong verbal morphology. The divergences that still exist at the vernacular level in each national territory respond to the fact that the norm has not reached everywhere, as the historical data show. The results that I have presented suggest that *tuteo*, *voseo* and *ustedeo* (in its two grammatical numbers) have followed identical patterns in their grammatical behaviour and allow for systematically arguing the number of variants that still exist today in the Hispanic world.

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