HISPANIC✤STUDIES
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The coherence between functional patterns
and cognitive construction: Spanish *usted* and *ustedes*
as displaced second persons

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Abstract

Spanish pronouns *usted* and *ustedes* entail an apparent discordance between reference and grammatical form, insofar as they index addressees but correlate with third-person morphemes. Their use represents a cognitive displacement from the prototypical second person as a way to construct others in discourse. This study analyzes their functional variation in a corpus of Peninsular written and oral media language and according to several features, including object marking with the particle *a*, object agreement through verbal clitics, and the formulation and placement of subject pronouns. While some results suggest the persistence of third-person features in *usted* and *ustedes*, they more often behave like first- and second-person forms. This is put in connection with the higher cognitive salience of addressees as against external referents. In turn, the strong preference for dative clitics and postverbal subject pronouns—the latter resembling subject-agreement morphemes—is interpreted as contributing to the functional differentiation of a grammatical paradigm not exactly assimilable to either second- or third-person ones.

1. The construction of others between the second and third persons[1]

In Spanish, the person paradigms represented by the pronouns *usted* and *ustedes* appear to constitute a case of discordance between grammatical form and reference. These pronouns correlate with third-person verbal endings when encoded as clause subjects (examples 1a, b).[2] When functioning as accusative or dative objects—which in Spanish are variably indexed in the verbal nucleus through clitics coming from Latin object pronouns—they also resort to third-person forms such as datives *le* and *les* (2a, b; 3). Finally, they correlate with third-person possessives such as *su* 'his/her/their' (3). However, all these elements are used to index interactional partners, as is done with the prototypical second-person paradigms of *tú* (singular) and *vosotros* (plural).[3]

2   In the English translations of the examples, all pronominal formulations and morphematical indexations of *usted* will be indicated with *you+*, and those of *ustedes* with *you all+*. The symbol [+] is used here as a convention to indicate that these special persons are not assimilable to the prototypical second ones, but rather add specific meanings to the latter.
3   *Vosotros*, resulting from the amalgam of Latin *vos* 'you (pl.)' and *otros* 'others', constitutes a specific plural second-person paradigm with its own associated verbal endings (e.g. *cantá-is* 'you all sing', *canta-d* 'sing [imp.]') and object clitics (e.g. *os vi* 'I saw you all'). However, its use in contemporary Spanish is basically restricted to Peninsular varieties, while in Canarian and American ones *ustedes* is the only plural second person (Fontanella de Weinberg 1999).

(1a) usted volv-   -e   -r-   -á   con nosotros
      you+   come back   THEME-V   FUT   3RD.SING   with us
'You+ will come back with us.'

(1b) ustedes   volv-   -e   -r-   -án   con nosotros
      you all+   come back   THEME-V   FUT   3RD.PL   with us
'You all+ will come back with us.'

(2a) a usted   no   le   interes-   -a   eso
      to you+   not   3RD.SING.DAT.CL   interest   THEME-V   that
'That doesn't interest you+.'

(2b) a ustedes   no   les   interes-   -a   eso
      to you all+ not   3RD.PL.DAT.CL   interest   THEME-V   that
'That doesn't interest you all+.'

(3) les   devuelv-   -o   sus   documentos
     3RD.PL.DAT.CL   give back   IST.SING   3RD.POS.PL   documents
'I'm giving you all+ your+ documents back.'

1.1. Person displacement and cognitive salience

Usted and *ustedes* resulted from the phonetical simplification of the NP *vuestra merced* 'your mercy' and its plural *vuestras mercedes* (Penny 1993: 138), used as deferential treatments in Spanish from around the 14th century. Many variants coexisted in conversational discourse—e.g. *vuesarced*, *vuested*—before the consolidation of the current ones in the 17th century (De Jonge 2005). Being lexical units, they required third-person verbal agreement through either subject verbal endings or object clitic pronouns. Grammatical transpositions related to psychosocial considerations have long been documented in different languages (Lapesa 2000: 316; Siewierska 2004: 215ff; Gardelle & Sorlin 2015: 10). Uses of the third person to denote addressees are in fact common cross-linguistically, just as are uses of the plural second person for the indexation of a single interlocutor—e.g. *vos* in Latin and classic Spanish, *vous* in French—or the so-called 'majestic', 'modesty' or 'authorial' plurals, whereby an individual can construct him/herself through plural first-person forms (Corbett 2000: 221; RAE 2009: §16.2).

This results in *usted* and *ustedes* being placed halfway between the third person—considering their formal features—and the second person—considering the kinds of participants they construct in discourse, i.e. interlocutors rather than entities external to the direct participants (Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2013: 112-114). They should thus be viewed as a special person type, not exactly assimilable to either one of those they share features with. García (2009: 49-61) formalizes *usted* and *ustedes* as a *IInd* person that would be paradigmatically—and cognitively—situated between the second and third ones. Most descriptions, however, are still based on psychosocial, largely impressionistic characterizations of these persons as 'formal' or 'polite' variants of the second persons proper (e.g. RAE 2009: §16.15r-v; De Cock 2014: 29).

In the present study we will use the term *displaced second persons* in order to encapsulate the construction of others through a singular and plural paradigm sharing features with both

second-person and third-person ones. Following a functional-cognitive approach whereby grammatical form is seen as inseparable from meaning, the use of third-person forms to index addressees and audiences must be thought to have some repercussion on the way the latter are shaped in speakers' perception. The notion of *displacement* should be understood as simultaneously grammatical—a morphematic subparadigm is chosen that does not prototypically refer to the direct participants, but rather to external entities—, sociopragmatic—as pointed out, the choice is usually described as indexing values like 'formality', 'politeness' or 'respect'—and cognitive—it helps speakers conceptualize addressees as detached from their own personal sphere, which ultimately explains all its possible contextual interpretations.

It is in fact cognitive factors that substantiate variation and choice in the system of grammatical persons. The use of some person for the discursive encoding of some entity has repercussions on the cognitive *salience* of the latter. Salience is the property of those referents that are cognitively important for speakers (Croft & Cruse 2004: 49-50). Such importance can be due to different reasons related to both their intrinsic features and the status they acquire within a given context. The direct participants, being inherent to communication itself, are more salient than any entities external to the communicative exchange. First and second persons are the main resources offered by most languages for the discursive-cognitive construction of the entities with the highest salience—their very ordinal characterizations being hardly random. However, and more crucially, they are at the same time possibilities of choice; speakers can choose to construct themselves as a second or third person instead of a first one—or even as no person at all, e.g. through an impersonal clause.

The same happens with addressees and audiences. *Usted* and *ustedes* represent the grammaticalization of a quite recurrent strategy to index others through third-person forms instead of the prototypical second-person ones. This entails constructing them as cognitively distanced from the domain of the direct participants and approaching that of external entities. Salience has further repercussions on the formal and functional configuration of the participants, including their variable indexation in the verbal nucleus through different morphemes or their explicit formulation vs. omission, the latter often being described as an index of salience or predictability (Givón 2010: 169), while less salient participants will be more often formulated. Our analysis of *usted* and *ustedes* will focus on a number of morphosyntactic features that reveal their variations in salience, stemming from the fact that they are used to encode interlocutors, but do so through third-person morphemes rather than second-person ones.

1.2. The present investigation

The purpose of this paper is to show, first, that the intermediate grammatical nature of *usted* and *ustedes*—between pronouns and lexical units, and between the second and third persons— is reflected in a number of peculiar features of morphosyntactic variation and choice in contemporary Peninsular Spanish. Second, that these features are coherent with a particular way of cognitively constructing 'the other', i.e. the addressee or audience, which in turn will have significant repercussions on the management of interpersonal relationships within communicative contexts.

The analysis will be based on the materials of the *Corpus de Lenguaje de los Medios de Comunicación de Salamanca* (MEDIASA), containing slightly more than 300,000 words evenly divided

between written-press and radio discourse.[4] These materials will be subject to quantitative analysis according to the functional features considered, as well as to the qualitative interpretation of significant examples in each case. This will make it possible to elucidate the connections between the use of the displaced second persons in discourse and their cognitive meanings. The approach adopted is a functional-cognitive one in the sense that all alterations in formal realization are viewed as linked to changes in meaning at different semiotic levels including the pragmatic, social and cognitive ones. Isomorphism is a fundamental tenet for different theoretical models of language (see Kuznetsova 2015: 4-5), even if it seems easier to posit in morphosyntax than in other domains (Croft 2010: 336).

The following five sections will be devoted to the discussion of increasingly complex morphosyntactic features that prove relevant for the functional description of *usted* and *ustedes*. These are object marking with the particle *a* (Section 2), object agreement with the verb through clitics (Section 3), the choice among different clitic forms (Section 4), the formulation of the pronouns *usted* and *ustedes* (Section 5) and their placement within the clause when formulated (Section 6). In all cases, quantitative analysis—which in several cases shows a certain solution to be (nearly) categorical—will be complemented with the cognitive interpretation of each choice through contextual examination. In Section 7, the findings made will be summarized. Finally, Section 8 will expose the main conclusions and offer some suggestions for further research.

2. Object marking with *a*

In Spanish, accusative/direct objects are variably marked with the prepositional particle *a* (Fábregas 2013; Aijón Oliva 2015). This particle has been shown to act as a functional index of the cognitive salience of referents, being significantly more frequent with animate and definite ones. *A* is also the functional mark used for dative/indirect objects, which correlate with semantically more autonomous participants than accusative ones (see further Section 4).

All this suggests that the relevant distinction is that between unmarked and marked objects, rather than the traditional one based on Latin cases (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011: 219). Objects with *a* are not only *marked* in the formal sense—i.e. they bear the *mark* associated with objects— but also in the functional and cognitive ones, that is, they can be considered non-prototypical ones. As observed by García-Miguel (2015: 235), the canonical object in Spanish is "a postverbal phrase not marked by a preposition and not indexed in the verb. [...] The tendency is to have morphologically marked objects for referents high in the animacy hierarchy and morphologically unmarked nominals for referents low in the animacy hierarchy." Therefore, marking with *a* is associated with animate, definite participants; these objects are less prototypical because they actually approach the formal and semantic features associated with subjects. This should explain the difference between e.g. *Encontré* a *mi hermano* 'I found [*to*] my brother' and *Encontré Ø mi cartera* 'I found my wallet'.

In accordance with this, the particle is mandatory whenever objects are formulated as either proper nouns or personal pronouns, the latter including *usted* (4) and *ustedes* (5). Only with lexical (third-person) NPs is marking variable according to a range of factors connected with salience (see further Aijón Oliva 2015: 13-18).

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4   The complete text of the corpus is available as an appendix to Aijón Oliva (2006) and online at [https://gredos.usal.es/jspui/handle/10366/138326]. It reflects a northern-central variety of Spanish quite close to the Peninsular standard—such closeness being favored by the public nature of the texts—which means that the distinction between a prototypical and a displaced second person holds for both the singular and plural paradigms.

(4)   supongo que considerará usté lógico que TODOS: / vayan
a intentar desalojarle *a usté* / porque: son ocho años y:: b- e: / e(s de)
cir / l- los- / los demás- / los demás también quieren mandar ¿no?
<Var-Co-230503-12:40>
'I guess you+ understand that they are all going to try to dump [*to*]
you+ out of office, because, I mean, it's been eight years already,
and others would also like to get their chance to rule, right?'

(5)   Miguel Ángel Huerta nos ayuda: a repasar la cartelera de
los Cines Van Dyck / todas las semanas / para: ponerles *a ustedes* al
corriente acerca de las novedades <Var-Co-230503-13:50>
'M.A.H. helps us every week to go through the movies showing at
Van Dyck Cinemas, in order to inform [*to*] *you all+* about the new-
est releases.'

The corpus contains no cases of objectual *usted* and *ustedes* without the particle *a*. As pointed
out, this is also what happens with first- and second-person object pronouns in contemporary
Spanish. Therefore, as regards this first morphosyntactic feature, *usted* and *ustedes* appear to
be fully grammaticalized as pronouns—in accordance with the inherent salience of addressees
and audiences as direct participants—and no functional remnants of their lexical origin can be
detected in the texts under analysis.

3. Object agreement through verbal clitics

Spanish has developed a system of objective conjugation whereby dative and accusative ob-
jects can be morphematically indexed in the verbal nucleus through clitics (see Enrique-Arias
1997, Franco 2000; García 2009: 79-81, among others). These resulted from the evolution of Latin
object pronouns, which became unstressed and lost positional mobility, coming to resemble
verbal morphemes usually placed at the left of the root: *te llamaré* 'I'll call *you*', *lo tienes* 'you have
it'. However, some formal and functional peculiarities still place clitics halfway between free
pronouns and affixes (Pena Seijas 1999: 4324ff; Belloro 2015: 71-83). In turn, object agreement re-
mains a matter of variation and choice that is tightly connected with the salience of referents—it
is significantly more frequent with dative objects, as well as with discursively topical and highly
accessible ones (Aijón Oliva 2006: 269-271; Belloro 2015: 50-54).

In principle, all referents encoded as personal pronouns in accusative and dative object con-
texts—which, as exposed above, need to be *a*-marked—require agreement. The formulation
of the pronouns is usually optional, but that of the clitics is not. Thus, for example, both *Me
llamaste* or *Me llamaste a mí* 'You called me' are correct, but not *Ø Llamaste a mí*. In this case the
rule does not extend to proper nouns or third-person animate referents, which can dispense
with the clitic when appearing at postverbal positions: Ø *Llamaste a Miguel* 'You called Miguel'.

As for *usted* and *ustedes*, (6) shows an instance of co-occurrence between the singular pro-
noun and the dative clitic *le* (see also 4 and 5 above), while in (7) only the clitic is formulated
in two consecutive clauses.[5] The presence of the clitic alone usually requires for its referential

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5   In the translations, parentheses will be used to indicate the omission of pronouns and their indexation
through either verbal endings or clitics.

interpretation to be unequivocal, either because the pronoun has appeared in previous clauses or because the contextual conditions—those of a letter to the editor in this example—make it obvious that the third-person morpheme is indexical of an interlocutor and not an external entity. These observations will also prove relevant for the analysis of pronoun expression vs. omission in Section 5.

> (6) ¿*a usté* no *le* parece que quizá: / e cuestiones como: / e: / esta: a la que nos estamos refiriendo hoy / m: no pueden ser ú / -nica y esclusi- / o no deben se:r única y esclusivamente de un Gobierno Central? <Var-On-281204-13:20>
> 'Doesn't it seem *to you+* that issues such as the one we are dealing with today cannot or should not be seen as the exclusive responsibility of the central government?'

> (7) *Le* escribo para *darle* cuenta de una situación que empieza a ser peligrosa. <Car-Ga-020604-8>
> 'I am writing (*to you+*) in order to inform (*you+*) about a situation that is starting to be dangerous.'

However, it has been pointed out that *usted* and *ustedes* diverge from first- and second-person pronouns in the relative tolerance of the former to clitic omission (RAE 2009: §16.14g).[6] The corpus contains two examples of object encoding where *ustedes* is not accompanied by the morpheme, thus behaving more like a lexical unit than a personal pronoun (8, 9). The symbol Ø indicates the points where the clitics would have been expected—in the first one there are actually two possible slots, since the nucleus is a pluriverbal construction. Also note that in both cases the pronoun is placed after the verb, this being the main contextual condition for clitic omission with lexical NPs.

> (8) para ir finalizan:do este apartado que Ø hemos venido ofreciendoØ *a ustedes* / día tras día: durante la campaña electoral <Var-Co-230503-13:20>
> 'In order to put an end to this section we have been offering *to you all+*, day after day, during the election campaign.'

> (9) Ø saludamos *a todos ustedes* que nos / sintonizan a través de la radio *a todos uste:des* / que: nos sintonizan / también / en Internet <Var-SE-230903-12:30>
> 'We now salute *all of you+* who tune in to us through your radios, as well as *all of you+* who tune in to us through the Internet.'[7]

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6 Written invitations often resort to the formula *X Ø saluda a usted y* le *invita a...* 'X greets *you+* and invites (*you+*) to...'. As can be observed, once the pronoun is elided the formulation of the clitic becomes necessary, as a deictic-anaphoric resource to maintain the reference activated across clauses.

7 It is also possible to argue that some instances of clitic omission be due to the on-the-fly production of oral discourse—the speaker could start formulating a non-agreeing verbal nucleus before deciding which objects should come after it. However, in the transcribed examples there are no pauses or intonational changes suggesting vacillation. Also, the resulting constructions are hardly ungrammatical, while similar situations with first- and second-person objects would probably have prompted reformulation.

Clitic omission is actually infrequent—these two cases represent just 8.3% of the total 24 tokens of overt *usted* or *ustedes* in object contexts. However, they confirm that in present-day Spanish it is possible for these pronouns to lack verbal agreement. It seems easy to interpret this fact in terms of salience, given that omission does not seem to happen with first- and second-person pronouns, while it is quite usual with postverbal lexical NPs (on the association between the preverbal position and salience, see further Section 5).

Therefore, while the behavior of *usted* and *ustedes* regarding object marking clearly mirrors that of first- and second-person forms, occasional failures in object agreement show that the former retain functional features associated to lexical items and thus correlate with a different way of addressee construction. Both phenomena are actually related, since objects marked with *a* show a stronger tendency to agree with the verb in variable contexts (García-Miguel 2015: 235), i.e. those where the object is a postverbal lexical NP. Agreement with *usted* and *ustedes* is subject to variation in the same contexts, although their diachronic process of pronominalization and the fact that they are used to index addressees should naturally favor agreement, just as they have promoted the generalization of *a*-marking. First- and second-person objects are inherently non-prototypical; *usted* and *ustedes* ones tend to reproduce this lack of prototypicity in their functional patterning.

4. The choice among verbal clitics

The first person and the prototypical second one show number distinctions in their clitic subsystems—namely *me* vs. *nos*; *te* vs. *os*—but no gender or case ones. This is obviously related to the usually unequivocal reference of these persons. It is also in accordance with our suggestion in Section 2 that the accusative/dative dichotomy is more of a legacy from Latin grammatical description than an actually relevant functional and cognitive dimension in contemporary Spanish.

The situation is however different with third-person clitics, which in the standard system are subject to case, gender and number distinctions. This affects *usted* and *ustedes*, which, being correlative with third-person paradigms, can distinguish between dative encoding with *le/les* (10) and accusative encoding, further differentiated for gender, with *lo/los* (masc.) and *la/las* (fem.) (11).

(10)	a usted	le	d-	-a-	r-	án	un regalo
	to you+	3RD.SING.DAT.CL	give	THEME-V	FUT	3RD.PL	a present

'They will give a present *to you+*.'

(11)	a usted	la	llev-	-a-	r-	án	a casa
	to you+	3RD.SING.ACC.FEM.CL	take	THEME-V	FUT	3RD.PL	to home

'They will take *you+* home.'

Case distinctions prove rather unstable and have been subject to wide variability from the initial stages of the language and in many of its present-day varieties (Fernández-Ordóñez 1999; Klein-Andreu 2000; Flores Cervantes 2006), resulting in phenomena such as *leísmo*, i.e. the use of *le* and *les* with objects approaching the accusative prototype. A special tendency has been observed of *usted* and *ustedes* to correlate with the dative forms irrespective of the syntactic context.

In a corpus of semi-directed interviews from Madrid, Paredes García (2015: 188) obtains 75 tokens of *le* or *les* out of a total 81 third-person clitics used to index addressees and audiences, i.e. there is 92.6% of dative choice. It could be objected that the displaced second persons, just like the first and prototypical second persons, are quite more often encoded as objects in dative contexts than accusative ones—and even more as subjects, in connection with their inherent salience (Aijón Oliva 2018: 580). However, the results of our corpus are more striking in this sense: the use of the dative forms is categorical in the 252 clitic indexations of *usted* or *ustedes* across the corpus. The examples transcribed so far—with the obvious exceptions of (8) and (9)—can serve as illustration. Especially significant are (4) and (5), with constructions a priori selecting an accusative object (*desalojar* 'to dump out' and *poner al corriente* 'to inform'), which anyway use dative clitics.

Again, this suggests that *usted* and *ustedes* tend to reproduce the functional patterns associated with the first and prototypical second persons rather than those of third ones. It is little wonder that the dative forms should be the preferred ones in varieties showing this tendency. The dative as a functional prototype entails higher salience than the accusative (García 1975: 99, 134; Comrie 2012: 20). It usually correlates with the thematic roles of receiver, experiencer or owner. These, in turn, represent lower degrees of autonomy than that of semantic agents, but in turn are higher in this respect than patients or themes. As noted by Whitley (1998: 119), the choice between accusative in dative clitics in variable contexts has to do with the extent to which the referent is seen as affected or 'impacted' by the process denoted by the verb. Also, as pointed out, the direct participants appear much more often in dative than accusative contexts.

All this is coherent with the lack of gender distinctions in dative clitics, in contrast with accusative ones, which are closer to third-person pronouns and lexical NPs as to their greater richness of grammatical specifications facilitating the identification of referents. Therefore, *usted* and *ustedes* objects again turn out to be *marked* in the senses exposed in previous sections—they correlate with the non-prototypical choices for objects, in this case dative clitics.

A number of concomitant factors, related to the peculiarities of media communication and to the interactional strategies developed within it, are also likely to have promoted the categorical use of *le* and *les* in the corpus. First, the reference of the clitics is often nonspecific, i.e. the target audiences of radio stations or the readership of journals, whom speakers will address with either singular or plural forms depending on whether they find it more advantageous to construct them as individuals or as groups. In such cases, *le* and *les* may be thought to be favored by their lack of gender marking, which helps avoid the suggestion that only men or women are addressed. This could be useful, for example, in radio commercials with a predominantly male target audience, as can be suspected in (12), where a hardware store is advertised. The radio anchors in (13) and (14) also choose *les* to index their audiences in accusative contexts. Whereas *los*, just as all plural masculine forms in Spanish, is routinely used as gender-unmarked with third-person referents (e.g. *A mis* amigos *no* los *vi* 'My friends [masc.] I didn't see', denoting a group where both men and women are included), it does not correlate with second-person ones in the corpus.[8]

> (12)   ofertas especiales / regalo de bienvenida: / s:orteo de una herramienta / y además / *le* invitamos a un aperitivo durante todo el día: <Anu-SE-230903-13:55>

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[8]   In some radio programs—especially music ones—prototypical second-person *vosotros/vosotras* is also addressed to the audience. In the rare occasions when broadcasters formulate the pronoun, they choose its masculine form, most probably with a gender-unmarked value.

'Special offers, welcome gifts, a raffle for a mechanical tool, and we will also be [3rd sing dat cl] treating (*you+*) with appetizers throughout the day.'

(13)   el equipo al completo que hace posible este programa / queremos *saludarles:* antes de entrar en materia / porque hoy tenemos M:Uchos asuntos / que atender <Dep-On-141204-15:05>
'The whole team producing this program wants to [3rd pl dat cl] greet (*you all+*) before getting to the subject, since today we have many issues to deal with.'

(14)   a la una *les* dejaremos con las noticias nacionales e internacionales para regresar: / en el segundo tramo del programa: / con el espacio de consumo <Var-On-080104-12:45>
'At 1 p.m. we'll [3rd pl dat cl] leave (*you all+*) with the national and international news, just to be back for the second segment of our program on consumer information.'

Even if the lack of gender specification in dative clitics might be a tempting explanation in contexts like these, other factors must also be at play, since the choice is also systematic when the referents are specific people addressed by speakers and there is no apparent reason to avoid gender marking. The fact can be more striking when the addressees are female, *leísmo* being altogether much more usual and acceptable for the indexation of masculine referents (García & Otheguy 1983: 111). Examples like *A Julia* le *vi ayer* 'Julia I [3rd sing dat cl] saw yesterday' would be unnatural in most Peninsular Spanish varieties.[9] The following examples show addressee indexation with *le* in an interview with a prominent local woman, namely the town councillor for employment. Both of the verbs—*invitar* 'to invite' and *esperar* 'to wait for'—are transitive in Spanish and could be formulated with accusative clitics, i.e. *la invitaba* and *la esperamos*.

(15)   yo *le:-* / *le:* m:: / invitaba / a- quizá: / a desarrollar políticas municipales de aYUda para que: <contratar a mujeres> no sea tan gravoso <Var-On-281204-13:15>
'I [3rd sing dat cl] would urge (*you+*) to, like, develop local policies of support, so that [hiring women] wouldn't be so burdensome.'

(16)   muchísimas gracias por haberno:s acompañado / y: *le* esperamos: / aquí en *Protagonistas* cuando quiera <Var-On-281204-13:20>
'Thank you very much for being with us, and we [3rd sing dat cl] will be waiting (*for you+*) here at *Protagonistas*, whenever you+ want.'

There has long been an intuition that the preference for dative forms has to do with socio-interactional factors, condensed in the notion of 'polite *leísmo*' (*leísmo de cortesía*; see Lorenzo Ramos 1981; Aijón Oliva 2006: 413-416), which also seems to emerge in the preceding examples.

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9   They are mostly restricted to areas where Spanish is in contact with non-Romance languages, such as the Basque region in northern Spain or the Andean territories of South America (Fernández-Ordóñez 1999: 1342, 1350).

Given the association of accusative *lo*, *la* and their plurals with less salient referents—as against dative clitics—their use to index addressees and audiences might be perceived as potentially detrimental to the speaker's image. As noted by Butt & Benjamin (1988: 119), "it is possible that for some speakers use of *lo* denotes contempt, a low estimate of the person's rationality (e.g. infants), or helplessness." Considering (17a) and (17b) as possible opening moves by a clerk amidst a shopping interaction, many speakers—at least in Peninsular Spanish—would disprefer the first one, which constructs the addressee as less salient and seems to suggest that she is more in need of help than with the dative.

>
> (17a)   ¿Puedo ayudar*la*? [3rd sing fem acc cl]
>
> (17b)   ¿Puedo ayudar*le*? [3rd sing dat cl]
> 'Can I help *you+*?'

All this suggests a process of generalization of *le* and *les* as the only object-agreement morphemes for the displaced second persons—even if they are of course used with third-person referents as well. Going back to examples (13) and (14), it could be argued that the alternatives with accusative clitics, i.e. *queremos saludarlos* and *los dejamos*, might prove ambiguous and prompt listeners to search for third-person referents in the context. As pointed out, the omission of *usted* and *ustedes* usually requires for the context to make it clear that the reference of the verbal morphemes is the addressee or audience. Dative clitics, associated with animacy and higher salience, seem to be easier to process as indexing interlocutors than accusative ones (Fernández-Ordóñez 1999: 1340; RAE 2009: §35.6j). Again, *usted* and *ustedes* resemble the first and prototypical second persons in their tendency to generalize a given singular clitic and a plural one for object agreement.

However, this is not meant to imply that dative agreement with *usted* and *ustedes* should be equally widespread in all varieties and communicative situations. Southern Peninsular Spanish dialects and American ones are usually more inclined to the maintenance of case distinctions. Also, the preference for forms perceived as 'polite' or 'formal', including dative clitics, is more characteristic of media and public discourse in general (Klein-Andreu 2000: 136) than of spontaneous communication. Even so, the perception of *le* and *les* as preferable choices when the referents are animate appears to hold cross-dialectally (DeMello 2002). In a study of the speech of Córdoba (Andalusia), Uruburu Bidaurrazaga (1993: 159) obtained just 16.7% of 'polite *leísmo*' with singular female referents and 11.5% with plural ones. The author views the scores as remarkable ones—third-person *leísmo* being rare in the dialect—even if they are clearly exiguous in comparison with our own results. From this we can conclude that the perception of dative clitics as enhancing the salience of referents is common to all varieties of the language, but its impact on quantitative patterns is quite uneven. It will depend on the influence exerted by competing features such as referent gender; some dialects, such as central Castilian ones, show a tendency to mark gender—usually through a *le/les* vs. *la/las* opposition—rather than animacy (see also DeMello 2002: 275).

Finally, it is worth to mention a related feature of clitic choice, namely the replacement of *les* with *le* when indexing plural referents (Company Company 2001: 23-25). In many contemporary varieties, the phenomenon is widespread and acceptable with postverbal third-person NPs, e.g. *Le trajeron regalos a los niños* 'They [3rd sing dat cl] brought presents *to the children*.' It can also happen with second-person referents in analogous contexts. Three examples with postverbal

ustedes, such as (18), were found in the corpus. However, these only represent 18.8% of a total 16 tokens. The higher salience of addressees and audiences seems to make standard plural marking a more usual choice, as in (19) and other examples transcribed above.

> (18)   como *le* decía *a todos ustedes* hace unos minutos / e:s: el: / r:esponsable de la organización / de las Jornadas sobre el Enveje-cimiento <Var-SE-230903-13:35>
> 'As I [3rd sing dat cl] was telling *all of you+* just a few minutes ago, he is in charge of organizing the Sessions on Aging.'

> (19)   y en el Ayuntamiento / como *les* decía *a ustedes* / tambié:n esta mañana se ha hablado de obras / concretamente las obras de acondicionamiento de los esteriores / del Museo del Comercio <Var-Co-230503-13:55>
> 'And at the Town Council, as I [3rd pl dat cl] was telling *you all+*, this morning there has also been talk about construction works, specifically those aimed at refurbishing the outside of the Muse-um of Commerce.'

The use of *le* in correlation with plural objects comes to show, first, the higher grammatical-ization of the dative forms as against the accusative ones. The singular dative clitic appears to be in the process of becoming a universal agreement morpheme for third-person objects, irrespec-tive of their gender and number features or the syntactic-semantic context where they appear. Second, in synchronic terms this again places *usted* and *ustedes* in an intermediate functional stage, with the first and second persons on one side—where no correlations between singular clitics and plural pronouns are documented—and third persons on the other—where the phe-nomenon is a quite frequent one.

5. Formulation of *usted* and *ustedes* in the clause

The last features to be considered are the ones showing the widest variability in the corpus. Like all verb-agreeing pronouns and lexical NPs in Spanish, *usted* and *ustedes* can be left un-expressed when speakers consider their referents to be straightforwardly identifiable through agreement morphemes. In (20), taken from a radio commercial, the audience is indexed with both third-person verbal endings and clitics. In a text of this sort, it is expectable for third-per-son morphemes to be interpreted as referring to the listener rather than to some external entity (see also 7 above, illustrating a different kind of context). The discursive conventions of genres usually make it clear whether it is the audience or some third-person referent that is being re-ferred to; much more so in oral communication, which is where most indexations occur.

> (20)   *le* ofrece la calidad de siempre en maderas: nobles / ma-cizas <...> párking gratuito para nuestros clientes / *venga* a visitar-nos <Anu-Di-200503-12:50>
> 'Offering (*you+*) the usual quality in noble and solid woods [...] Free parking for our clients. (*You+*) come and visit us.'

In turn, when formulated, the pronouns can further be placed at different points of the clause, most significantly before or after the verbal nucleus. (21) and (22) respectively illustrate the preverbal and postverbal placement of *ustedes* as a subject (see further Section 6 on pronoun placement).

> (21)   Pero *ustedes* también *se han vuelto* más reivindicativos que cuando gobernaba Aznar. <Ent-Ad-131104-17>
> 'But *you all+* have also become more demanding than when A. was in office.'

> (22)   pues ahí *tienen ustedes* una opinión más acerca de estos asuntos que depende cómo se enfoquen <Var-Co-211204-13:15>
> 'Well, there *you all+* (postv.) have yet another opinion on these issues, which can be approached from different angles.'

It has been pointed out that *usted* and *ustedes* have a significant preference for formulation as against first- and second-person pronouns (Rosengren 1974: 25; Serrano 2012: 110; Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2013: 114-115). Here the discussion will be restricted to contexts of subject encoding—which are much more numerous—in order not to excessively complicate the analysis of an already intricate issue by taking different syntactic functions into account. First, Tables 1 and 2 respectively show the token numbers and percentages of expression vs. omission for *usted* and *ustedes*, in comparison with those of the first- and prototypical second-person pronouns, as well as with those of third-person animate subjects.[10]

Pronoun	Expression		Omission	
	#	%	#	%
1st singular (*yo*)	569	26.3	1594	73.7
2nd singular (*tú*)	92	8.7	965	91.3
Displ. 2nd singular (*usted*)	104	22.5	358	77.5
3rd singular animate subjects	3,027	31.3	6,635	68.7

Table 1. Expression vs. omission of singular subject pronouns

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10   The inclusion of third persons actually poses a number of analytical problems, given their much wider array of formal and referential possibilities—they can denote any sorts of entities and be formulated as proper nouns, lexical NPs, different kinds of pronouns, or just omitted. Understandably, in the latter case it is often difficult to ascertain whether it is a personal pronoun or any other sort of element that has been elided. Here the calculations have been restricted to third-person subjects with animate referents, in order to approximate the usual features of first- and second-person subjects.

Pronoun	Expression		Omission	
	#	%	#	%
1st plural (*nosotros*)	246	9.9	2,245	90.1
2nd plural (*vosotros*)	10	10.8	83	89.2
Displ. 2nd plural (*ustedes*)	67	30.6	152	69.4
3rd plural animate subjects	2,449	39.6	3,734	60.4

Table 2. Expression vs. omission of plural subject pronouns

Interestingly, first-person *yo* turns out to surpass *usted* in its rate of expression. This is mainly a result of the pragmaticalization of the first-person pronoun, usually at the preverbal position, as a resource for argumentative discourse as well as a turn-taking device in conversation, most often in constructions such as *yo creo*, *yo pienso* 'I think' (see further Bentivoglio 1987: 61; Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2010: 16-21). Aside from this exception, *usted* and *ustedes* are more inclined to formulation than first- and second-person pronouns, but less so than third-person subjects. The percentage of overt *ustedes* (30.6%) roughly triples those of *nosotros* and *vosotros*; the same can be said of singular *usted* as against *tú*.

Thus, the quantitative results clearly place *usted* and *ustedes* in an intermediate zone between first and second persons on one hand and third persons on the other. This is suggestive of their lexical origin. NPs entail lower salience than pronouns, since more detailed ways of formulation indicate that the speaker perceives their referents as less easily recoverable by the audience; in Chafe's (1994: 73) terms, they are less activated (see also Ariel 1988: 69-70 on accessibility). For the same reason, NPs tend to be associated with object encoding and postverbal placement, more so when they are inanimate or indefinite (García-Miguel 2015: 218-221), while the direct participants are systematically formulated through pronouns, or simply indexed through agreement morphemes, and prefer subject encoding.

The analysis of specific instances of pronoun expression suggests that pragmatic and social factors may also be involved in the results. This is not contradictory with our explanation based on cognitive salience and the persistence of some third-person functional tendencies in *usted* and *ustedes*, but rather comes to support it. The first aspect to be considered is the potential ambiguity of verbal endings. Whereas dative clitics, associated with animacy and definiteness, are easy to interpret as indexing addressees and audiences (see Section 4), this can hardly be the case with third-person verbal endings realizing subject agreement, which are regularly used to index any referents external to the direct participants, irrespective of their animacy and definiteness. The following examples of pronoun formulation are amenable to an explanation based on morphematic ambiguity. While the choice is altogether infrequent in written-press discourse, the author in (23) may have perceived that the bare subjunctive verbal form *lea* 'read' could be interpreted as indexing either *yo*, *usted* or a third-person referent.[11] Similarly, in (24) the plural verb *pidieron* 'requested' might well correlate with a third-person referent. The construction could also be interpreted as an indefinite one, roughly meaning 'someone requested'.

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[11]   Interestingly, the prototypical second person (*tú*) is the only singular one that systematically—except for the imperative—has unambiguous verbal endings, the first and third persons being homonymous in several tenses (RAE 2009: §4.4h-i).

(23) El sorteo de la lotería que se está celebrando esta mañana (a lo mejor cuando *usted lea* esto ya salió el gordo), no es de los más fructíferos en cuanto a premios pero es seguramente el de mayor popularidad. <Art-Ad-221203-16>

'The lottery draw that is under way this morning—maybe when *you+* read this the big prize will have already come out—is not among the most profitable ones as regards prizes, but it is arguably the most popular one.'

(24) nos acercaremos hasta el Centro de Cultura: / Tradicional Ángel Carril / para / resolver algunas du:da:s y para / recabar información que nos *pidieron ustedes* / ayer <Var-SE-230903-13:00>

'We'll take a walk around the A.C. Center for Traditional Culture, so as to answer some questions and gather some information *you all+* requested from us yesterday.'

In spite of this, hypotheses on 'functional compensation' (see e.g. Hochberg 1986, Cameron 1993), i.e. those based on the assumption that linguistic choice tends to compensate for potential ambiguity in the context, have often been challenged and in any case need to be treated with caution. They are based on interpretations of speakers' intentions that are difficult to objectivize, and often are not even supported by the data (Silva-Corvalán & Enrique-Arias 2017: 176-182). In our case, disambiguation can only be safely put forward as an explanatory factor in a small number of cases, such as the ones transcribed above. As pointed out regarding example (20), the reference is generally made evident by the context and/or the conventions of the genre. Several studies have suggested that the homonymy between persons in different verbal tenses does not significantly favor pronoun expression (see Travis 2007; De Cock 2014: 140).

In turn, pragmatic factors related to the degree to which referents are considered to be contextually recoverable, thus salient, can offer more reliable explanations of pronoun formulation. The choice shows up in contexts where a contrast or a shift between subject referents across consecutive clauses is carried out (Travis 2007: 107). While in (25) it could still be argued that there is an intention to disambiguate *usted* from an immediately preceding third-person subject—*Hidalgo*—in (26) the contrast is established with first-person *yo*, and the respective verbal endings are unambiguous. Subject expression is characteristic of argumentative conversational discourse as in this excerpt.

(25)   ¿Se enfadará Hidalgo porque *usted busque* a otro presidente? <Ent-Ga-121203-49>
'Will Hidalgo get angry if *you+* find a different president?'

(26)   yo: he detectao algo distinto en la ciudad de Salamanca / he detectao dos cosas primero / m: / una buena acogida a nuestra campaña / después no he detectao eso que *usted dice* <Var-Co-230503-12:55>
'I have perceived something different in Salamanca. I've perceived two things—first, that our campaign has been well received. And

then, I have not perceived those things *you+* are alluding to.'

More generally, pronoun formulation occurs whenever there is some intention to direct attention towards the referent, thus depriving it from salience irrespective of whether it is recoverable from the preceding context (Serrano 2012: 111-112; 2013). This can have different pragmatic effects, including those already alluded to—reference disambiguation and explicit contrast between co-occurring referents. It can also suggest emphasis on the involvement of referents in the events discussed, making it possible to construct either a positive or a negative image of them, depending on how those events are evaluated (Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2013: 219-221). In this sense, compare the effects of preverbal *usted* in (27) and in (28). In the first case, a soccer coach is metaphorically viewed as the *doctor* that managed to save a terminally ill club. In the second one, a member of the local administration is accused of negligent fund management, with two cases of subject expression in three clauses.

> (27)   sin duda / este: enfermo / tiene mejor: pinta / ahora está
> / en planta y cuando *usted* lo *cogió* / e:staba / en la Uvi <Dep-
> Co-080104-14:50>
> 'This patient certainly looks much better. He's now under ordinary
> care, and when *you+* took him on he was in the ICU.'

> (28)   estamos hablando de unas cantidades / que parece que no
> es nada pero es que es muchísimo *usté ha puesto* / prácticamente el
> doble de lo que *tenía* previsto en ese programa / porque *usté* no *or-
> ganizó* bien la gestión del:- / del programa <Inf-On-080104-13:50>
> 'We're speaking about amounts of money that may sound like pea-
> nuts, but they are in fact huge. *You+* have spent practically twice as
> much on that program as (*you+*) had planned to, just because *you+*
> didn't correctly organize its administration.'

In sum, the rates of subject pronoun expression of *usted* and *ustedes* are altogether higher than those of first- and second person subjects, and lower than those of third-person ones. While in some cases this can be viewed as a strategy of disambiguation, in more general terms it reveals a tendency to construct addressees and audiences as less salient than the prototypical second persons for a variety of pragmatic reasons. It is however important to combine the results of pronoun formulation with those of placement within the clause (Section 6) in order to achieve full understanding of the cognitive implications of functional variation.

6. Placement of *usted* and *ustedes* in the clause

Rather than pronoun expression, the feature that most clearly separates *usted* and *ustedes* from the first and prototypical second persons is their rates of postverbal placement when expressed (Tables 3 and 4). Postposition accounts for 40.4% of the singular tokens and 58.2% of the plural ones. *Ustedes* is actually the only first- or second-person pronoun that is more often postposed than preposed to the verb in the corpus, its frequency even surpassing that of third-person animate subjects, as also shown by the table. The subsequent analysis will be mainly concerned with these facts, showing that the frequencies of postposed *usted* and *ustedes*—most often for-

mulated at the immediately postverbal position—are not only a further manifestation of their intermediate nature, but are also related to an apparent tendency of the subject pronouns to take over the functions of verbal morphemes indexing subject agreement.

Pronoun	Preverbal		Postverbal	
	#	%	#	%
1st singular (*yo*)	519	91.2	50	8.8
2nd singular (*tú*)	77	83.7	15	16.3
Displ. 2nd singular (*usted*)	62	59.6	42	40.4
3rd singular animate subjects	1,720	56.8	1,307	43.2

Table 3. Preverbal vs. postverbal placement of singular subject pronouns

Pronoun	Preverbal		Postverbal	
	#	%	#	%
1st plural (*nosotros*)	192	78	54	22
2nd plural (*vosotros*)	9	90	1	10
Displ. 2nd plural (*ustedes*)	28	41.8	39	58.2
3rd plural animate subjects	1,173	47.9	1,276	52.1

Table 4. Preverbal vs. postverbal placement of plural subject pronouns

As already noted with regard to examples (27) and (28), the preverbal placement of subjects—this being their position in the prototypical transitive clause (Langacker 2008: 357)—stresses the involvement of their referents in the content. In (29), the interviewee and the political party he represents are given the credit for the improvement of life in the town.

(29)   desde que *ustedes gobiernan* / efectivamente don Alberto estará de acuerdo conmigo / ha comenzado / a: trascender ese digamos / fenómeno / de sentirse uno orgulloso de ser de Salamanca y de esta ciudaz <Var-Co-230503-12:35>
'Since *you all+* are in office—and Mr. Alberto will no doubt agree with me—the, say, phenomenon has grown more noticeable of people feeling prouder of being from Salamanca, from this town.'

In turn, subject postposition has been linked to the reduction of clause transitivity through the inversion of the prototypical SVO scheme (Delbecque 2005: 9; Posio 2012; Serrano 2012: 115-117). Within postverbal tokens, it seems advisable to draw a further distinction between clause-fi-

nal ones and those placed right after the verb and before other constituents (Serrano 2014: 141-145). The clause-final position is the one prototypically associated with non-salient referents and the one where the general pragmatic effect of pronoun expression—i.e. directing attention towards the referent—becomes more evident. The speaker in (30), after summing up an idea that had been expressed earlier in a written piece by his addressee—who is formulated as a pre-verbal subject—apparently tries to check that it was actually the latter who wrote that. This time the pronoun appears at the clause-final position, with only a question tag after it.

> (30) *usté* ya *escribió* algo en ese sentido de que / algunas / ideas / no: / se pueden plantear así <entre risas>porque los edificios tienen dueño</entre risas> / ya lo *dijo usté* ¿no? <Var-Co-230503-12:50>
> '*You+* already wrote something in this sense, meaning that one can't just raise certain proposals without bearing in mind [*laughing*] that buildings are someone's property. *You+* [postv.] already said that, right?'

However, there are but a few examples like this one in the corpus; when *usted* and *ustedes* appear at the end of the clause, they are usually encoded as syntactic objects. In turn, as postverbal subjects they overwhelmingly prefer the clause-intermediate position, i.e. the VSO scheme. 35 out of 42 postverbal *usted* tokens (83.3%) and 33 of 39 *ustedes* ones (84.6%) opt for this solution (see e.g. 22 and 24 above). What is more, in nuclei composed of two verbal lexemes—such as those containing an aspectual or modal auxiliary—the pronouns are often inserted between them, i.e. right after the tensed one (examples 31 and 32; see also De Cock 2014: 139; De Cock & Nogué 2017: 113-114 for this constructional scheme). This suggests a tendency of the [verbal nucleus + *usted*(*es*)] pattern to become grammaticalized, which is worth further discussion.

> (31) se trata además: / de lo que / e: *acaban ustedes de escuchar* de que los alumnos de la Universidad de Salamanca puedan realizar prácticas en dependencias de la Junta <Var-Co-230503-13:25>
> 'The goal is what *you all+* just heard [lit. finish *you all+* hearing], that is, for University of Salamanca students to be eligible for internships at facilities of the regional administration.'

> (32) este programa lo hacemos todos los miércole:s en: colaboración: / con la Fa: Salaman- / con la FundaCIÓN Salamanca Ciudad de Cultura // *pueden ustedes participar* a través del telé:fono <Var-SE-011204-13:30>
> 'This program we make every Wednesday in cooperation with the S.C.C. Foundation. *You all+* can participate [lit. can *you all+* participate] via the telephone.'

While the persistence of lexical features in *usted* and *ustedes* might again be held accountable for their functional patterning as regards pronoun placement, this does not totally justify their striking rates of postposition even when encoded as subjects. Rather, we can hypothesize that the higher salience associated with *usted* and *ustedes* as against third-person NPs and pronouns results in the tendency of the former to remain adjacent to the clause nucleus, in either the SVO

pattern or the VSO one.

From this it would follow that, in cases of postposition, *usted* and *ustedes* tend to behave quite like inflectional morphemes adjoined after verbal endings proper. This recalls the general pattern of morphosyntactic evolution famously put forward by Givón (1976), whereby overt postverbal pronouns would grammaticalize into subject agreement morphemes, utterance-initial topics in turn becoming integrated in the clause as overt preverbal subjects. Actually, in several verbal tenses the singular third person lacks agreement morphemes of its own, or these are at most amalgamated with the theme vowel. The apparent tendency of *usted* and *ustedes* to function as right-of-the-root morphemes would make it possible to systematically distinguish between displaced second-person verbal forms and third-person ones with no overt subject, as in the following pair of constructed examples:

(33a)	Tien-	-e-		-usted	mucha razón
	have	THEME-V		YOU+	much reason

'You+ are quite right.'

(33b)	Tien-	-e-		-Ø	mucha razón
	have	THEME-V			much reason

'He/she is quite right.'

Rather than a strategy of referential disambiguation—which, as pointed out, is difficult to objectivize as a determining factor—what this suggests is the development of particular strategies for the discursive construction of a special kind of participant, whose cognitive interpretation does not exactly coincide with either that of the prototypical second person or those of third ones, as the analysis across the preceding sections should have shown. It is especially important to recall the apparent tendency of dative clitics to become specialized for displaced second-person object agreement (see Section 4), which is somehow mirrored by the tendency of pronouns *usted* and *ustedes* to occupy the immediately postverbal position as marks of displaced second-person subject agreement. In other words, the Spanish person system would be undergoing a process of redistribution in order to differentiate a specific paradigm whose units are all borrowed from third-person ones—even the stressed pronouns, coming from NPs—but whose referential uses are mostly coincident with those of second-person ones. However, further diachronic research would be necessary in order to certify this apparent tendency of *usted* and *ustedes* to become grammaticalized as subject-agreement morphemes.

The pragmatic effects of the phenomenon and their cognitive correlates are analogous to those of other subject pronouns in VSO constructions (see Padilla García 2001: 249-251; Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2013: 129-130). The intermediate placement of pronouns is parallel to an intermediate status between salience and informativeness, which results in referents lacking both the agency or involvement associated with preverbal subjects and the patienthood of postverbal objects. In both (34) and (35), the choice favors the interpretation that the role of the addressee in the event is to some extent known or presupposed by the speaker, which can lead to different contextual interpretations (Serrano 2012: 117-119).

(34)   <A> pues bueno pues a buenos entendedore:s / [con pocas palabras basta / solamente / feliz-]
<B> [sí / está claro / lo ha- lo ha esplicao *usté* muy bien /] muchas

gracias <Var-SE-211204-13:55>
'A: Well, anyway, a word to the wise is enough. Just to wish you
a happy— – B: Yes, it's quite clear. *You+* [postv.] have explained it
very well. Thanks a lot.'

(35)   ¡oiga por cierto! tiene *ustez* aquí ¿e:h? / sus dos: / invitaciones
/ para ver este sábado / a David Broza <Var-SE-011204-13:20>
'Hey, listen! Here *you+* [postv.] have your two invitations to watch
D.B. on Saturday.'

In the first example, the speaker intends to reassure his interlocutor by stating that her previous explanation of an economic issue had already been understood. In a context of this sort, preverbal placement (usted *lo ha explicado muy bien*) would suggest a somewhat newer assessment, while clause-final postverbal placement (*lo ha explicado muy bien* usted) would favor a contrastive interpretation of the referent that seems scarcely coherent. The effect of the choice in (35) is even more interesting. The man calling to the program has just been awarded two tickets for a concert, and the broadcaster reminds him that he can come and pick them up. In this case, preverbal placement (usted *tiene aquí sus dos invitaciones*) would seem to highlight the gift—and thus, implicitly, the generosity of the radio station that has granted it. It could also be understood as a directive, suggesting that it is the responsibility of the addressee to take care of the tickets. In turn, the VSO pattern again presents the fact as mutually accepted.

Analogous interpretations of postposition are possible with other expressions found in the corpus, such as *tiene usted la palabra* 'you+ have the floor' (36), as well as in different communicative domains, e.g. invitations like *pase usted* 'you+ come in'—even if in the latter case the referentially contrastive interpretation would also be possible, since the pronoun occupies the clause-final position.[12]

(36)   <A> bien / don Julián / tiene *usté* la palabra /
<B> bueno pues yo: e: / quería: / si se me permite deci:r pues: /
rápidamente // que yo creo que los salmantinos deben de seguir
confiando en nuestra opción política <Var-Co-230503-12:35>
'A: OK, Mr. Julián, now *you+* [postv.] have the floor. – B: Well, if I
may and to put it in a few words, I think the Salamanca people
should keep on trusting our political option.'

Therefore, the placement of subject pronouns right after the verb and before the objects avoids directing attention towards their referents as would be done at the clause-final position; rather, they occupy a scarcely prominent position where they resemble subject-agreement morphemes. The cognitive meaning of the choice is thus not far from that of omitted-subject constructions (Aijón Oliva & Serrano 2010: 25-26, 29; Posio 2012). Pragmatically, this results in the suggestion that the involvement of the referent in the event is shared knowledge rather than new information, implying that it should be readily accepted by all participants. In (37), a broadcaster discussing the intricacies of the public budget with the local councillor for employment

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12   The peculiar functional behavior of *usted* is again manifest in the fact that the postverbal expression of *tú* seems much less expectable in the same contexts: ?*tienes tú la palabra*. As for *pasa tú*, it would practically force a contrastive reading.

resorts to the anticipatory *no dejará de reconocer usted* 'you+ [postv.] cannot but recognize' with the obvious intention to force the other's acquiescence by presenting her own stance as a given. The insertion of the pronoun between the verbs forming the construction (*no dejará* usted *de reconocer*) would also have been possible (compare with 31 and 32 above). Similarly, we can find expressions with the plural form, such as (*como*) *saben ustedes* '(as) you all+ [postv.] know' (38), *ya ven ustedes* 'you all+ [postv.] already see', etc. They are used to connect the content of discourse with ideas previously exposed; they thus highlight the presupposed or mutually shared nature of such content.

> (37)   la verdaz es que al final / nos podemos acabar haciendo un lío / treMEN:do / porque: no recono- / no *dejará* de reconocer *usted* / que es un tema: / con enJUNdia lo de los presupuestos: <Var-On-281204-13:15>
> 'Truly, we can end up by getting it all terribly mixed up. Because *you+* [postv.] cannot but recognize that this whole issue of the public budget is quite an intricate one.'

> (38)   y no es que quiera ahora carga:r de responsabilidaz / e / y de exigencia a Rafa Sierra / con el que algunas veces bien *saben ustedes* hemos discrepado / las menos / pero alguna <Dep-Co-080104-14:35>
> 'And it's not that I should intend to place all responsibility and exigence on R.S., with whom, *you all+* [postv.] are well aware of it, we've disagreed sometimes. Rarely, but we have.'

In sum, the high rates of postposition of *usted* and *ustedes*, in most cases placed right after the verb, suggest a tendency of these pronouns to become fixed in that position and integrated into the verbal nucleus as a sort of inflectional morphemes, helping differentiate displaced second-person verbal forms from third-person ones. The pragmatic effects of the choice are similar to those of pronoun omission, diverting explicit attention from the referent—which is thus constructed as salient—and presenting their involvement in the event as commonly known information, in line with what previous studies on VSO clauses have shown.

7. Summary

Figure 1 summarizes the behavior of *usted* and *ustedes* according to the functional features considered, indicating the approximate spots where either person could be placed on a functional-cognitive continuum between first and second persons on one hand and third persons on the other.
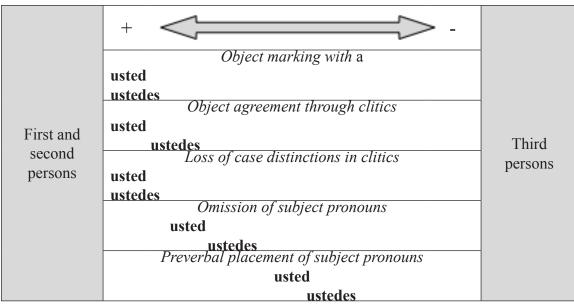
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First and second persons	*Object marking with* a **usted** **ustedes**	Third persons
	Object agreement through clitics **usted** **ustedes**	
	Loss of case distinctions in clitics **usted** **ustedes**	
	Omission of subject pronouns **usted** **ustedes**	
	Preverbal placement of subject pronouns **usted** **ustedes**	

Figure 1. Functional patterning of usted *and* ustedes *according to the features considered*

As regards object marking with *a* and the lack of case distinctions in clitics, *usted* and *ustedes* behave exactly like the first and prototypical second persons—always according to the materials of the corpus analyzed, which need not be totally coincident with others from different geographical varieties and communicative situations, particularly as regards the second feature. The generalization of dative clitics *le* and *les* is coherent with the inherent salience of addressees and audiences as against third persons, which tend to be endowed with richer grammatical specifications to facilitate referential identification. However, the results have probably been favored by the prestige held by these forms in public discourse, as well as by the preference of northern and central Peninsular Spanish for them over accusative forms, particularly masculine ones.

As for lack of object agreement with expressed pronouns, only two cases were found in plural contexts; however, they confirm the observations made in previous studies. The phenomenon can be interpreted as revealing the persistence of lexical features in *usted* and *ustedes* and their lower salience in comparison with the first and prototypical second persons.

With the remaining features, i.e. subject pronoun formulation and placement within the clause, the results are far from categorical—but so are they with the first and second persons. *Usted* and *ustedes* show comparably high rates of expression and especially of postverbal placement, and in this sense they approach the behavior of third-person subjects. This is more evident with the plural form, suggesting its lower cognitive salience and lesser grammaticalization. The tendency of subject pronouns to be formulated right after the verb rather than at the clause-final position resembles the behavior of subject-agreement verbal endings and can be interpreted as a strategy to compensate for the lack of grammatical information of third-person morphemes.

All in all, the analysis shows that the functional behavior of the displaced second persons tends to be intermediate between the first and second persons on one hand and third persons on the other, in parallel to their also intermediate nature at the cognitive level—they construct addressees and audiences as being at some distance from the sphere of the direct participants and thus closer to that of external entities.

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8. Conclusions and prospects

The displaced second persons, represented by the pronouns *usted* and *ustedes*, have a hybrid functional and cognitive nature in contemporary Spanish. They are used to index addressees and audiences, but correlate with third-person agreement morphemes, as a consequence of their origin in lexical NPs that were used to respectfully address interlocutors. We have analyzed a number of features of morphosyntactic variation and choice, showing that the functional patterns followed by *usted* and *ustedes* tend to resemble those of the first and second persons; however, they sometimes approach those of third persons, as is most evident with the formulation and placement of subject pronouns.

The patterns found are correlates of particular cognitive meanings that could hardly be constructed with either the prototypical second persons or the third ones. Our results point to the grammaticalization of a special person paradigm—most clearly singled out by the generalization of third-person dative clitics and the apparent tendency of postverbal subject pronouns to become functionally analogous to verbal endings—whose synchronic functional variation offers a wide range of possibilities to generate meaning in communicative contexts. Here we have proposed the notion of *displacement* in order to encapsulate the meaningful effects of discursively encoding interlocutors through originally third-person forms, thus as less salient than they would be with prototypical second-person ones. Rather than mere 'formal', 'polite' or 'respectful' alternatives to the second persons, as they are still usually characterized, *usted* and *ustedes* need to be viewed as inherently meaningful person choices that are used to construct addresses and audiences in a different way than is done with *tú* and *vosotros*.

Further research is necessary in order to develop a theoretical model of *person*, whereby the cognitive foundations of this grammatical dimension can be systematically connected with its patterns of functional variation, as well as with the pragmatic repercussions of person choice in communicative contexts. As exposed across this article, persons must be understood as ways to construct entities in cognition. The peculiar functional behavior of *usted* and *ustedes* reveals the construction of a kind of discursive participant that is cognitively different from both the prototypical addressee or audience and external entities. A scientific approach assuming the inherently meaningful nature of linguistic forms, and interpreting functional patterns with regard to cognitive factors, offers the widest possibilities for future research on linguistic variation and choice.

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