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Addressing in two presidential election debates in Mexico (1994 and 2012)

Forms and functions

Abstract: The distribution of a corpus of Spanish forms of address ($n = 3,548$) in two Mexican presidential election debates (broadcast in 1994 and 2012) is organized according to two dimensions: *grammatical form* and *appellative function*. It is shown that while in the 2012 debate the candidates use an informal address system, which is almost non-existent in the 1994 debate, these forms are geared towards the citizens who are the candidates' target audience. In the 2012 debate the candidates are addressed with neutral nominal forms or formal grammatical forms. In 2012 horizontal configuration among the interlocutors is restricted to the candidates-citizens relationship. In 1994 there is a predominance of vertical configuration among the candidates and neutrality with citizens as a collective body.

Keywords: grammatical forms of address, nominal forms of address, appellative function of language, Spanish forms of address, presidential-election debates in Mexico

1 Introduction

At present, in the face of the demands of citizens in republican countries to encourage dialogic practices between those who govern and those governed, debates among candidates running for political positions in open elections have taken on a basic role in democratic processes. Moreover, these debates are broadcast over all multimedia spaces available to the community, mainly television, radio and the Internet.

Since their inception during the 1960s, presidential debates not only include the opposing candidates, but also one or more moderators, members of the press and, on occasions, voting citizens, which in turn means a complex network of interlocutors on different levels: those who are entitled to take the floor, the arbitrators, and the spectators who cannot speak but who in reality are the candidates' target

Note: I thank Georganne Weller Ford for the translation into English from the Spanish original. All errors are my sole responsibility.

audience. In addition to other concerns, the social deixis system of the language being spoken, including forms of address, plays a central role in the configuration of this network of participants during televised presidential election debates.

The objective of this study is to identify the deictic referents of the grammatical and nominal forms of address employed in two Mexican presidential election debates (1994 and 2012) and to contrast their use. The analysis is based on grammatical and pragmatic categories, specifically according to grammatical person, the nominal forms utilized, and the *appellative function* (Bühler 1982 [1934]).

The chapter is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the historical-political motivations that led to the inclusion of debates among candidates aspiring to positions of popular election in diverse electoral processes in Mexico. It also describes the circumstances under which the 1994 and 2012 debates selected for this study were carried out, as well as their discursive structure. Section 3 provides a brief overview of other studies on the referents of forms of address in political debates and defines the formal and functional categories involved, which form the basis of the quantitative aspects of this study. Sections 4 to 7 are devoted to the empirical study. Section 4 describes the corpus of the items included as forms of address in both debates, sets out the central issues to be covered in the study regarding who the referents were, and proposes how to cross some formal and functional variables of forms of address for the referents of these items. Sections 5 and 6 present the quantitative results according to formal and functional criteria respectively. Section 7 includes a contrastive analysis of both debates and a synthesis of the study's findings, followed by the conclusion.

2 The 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates

The Mexican political system is a republican model with three federal powers: the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches. The Executive branch is composed of only one person, the president, who is elected directly by the citizens. The presidential term lasts for six years with no reelection allowed, as stipulated in Article 83 of the Mexican Constitution (*Constitución política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*). Non-reelection has always been respected since the promulgation of this 1917 Constitution, which is still the law of the country.

Nevertheless, during most of the 20th century, the presidents of the Republic were members of the same political party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Throughout history, this party gained power in most sectors of society, which in turn made it the party of the State. In fact, the Executive branch, with presidents in office for six years, extended its control to the Legislative and

Judicial powers as well (Cosío Villegas 1973, 1974, 1975a and 1975b). Political plurality barely began to gain ground in the decade of the sixties, when a shaky and slow process some called the ‘transition to democracy’ arose (Becerra, Salazar & Woldenberg 2005; Woldenberg 2012). Little by little, opposition political parties began to occupy seats in Congress and a few governorships in the states. Finally, by the year 2000, a candidate from an opposition party won the presidency (Ortega Ortiz 2010).

As part of its control in diverse arenas of social life, the State party enjoyed an exclusive presence in most of the mass media’s broadcasts, especially television (Sánchez Ruiz 2005). Up until the 1980s, almost any candidate from an opposition party had appeared on screen and, if seen at all, it was only for a few seconds. However, by the 1990s, particularly in 1994, a year of presidential elections, the Mexican political system had fallen into a severe crisis, as attested, among other events, by the uprising of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (‘Zapatista Army of National Liberation’) – a movement against the Mexican Army by indigenous peoples from the state of Chiapas in the southeastern part of the country – and the assassination of the presidential candidate from the dominant party of the State.

In the face of a firm conviction by most citizens that there was electoral fraud in 1988, and the ensuing political and social events during these years, in 1994 the presidential candidates from opposing parties signed the ‘Pact for Peace, Democracy and Justice’, which included the following paragraph in addition to demands for establishing an impartial electoral institution to represent citizens:

Nuestros acuerdos [...] son: [...] 3. Garantías de equidad en los medios de comunicación masiva, aprovechando los tiempos del estado y promoviendo que los medios concesionados contribuyan eficazmente al fortalecimiento del proceso democrático. Se propiciarán nuevos espacios e iniciativas que favorezcan la participación, objetividad y respeto de todas las fuerzas políticas. Esto garantizará la comunicación de los candidatos con los ciudadanos y la presentación de sus programas y puntos de vista sobre los asuntos más relevantes para la vida del país. (Pérez Fernández del Castillo et al. 2009, vol. 3: 188).

‘Our agreements [...] are: [...] 3. Guarantees of equity in mass media communication, making use of the State’s time on the air and fostering licensed media to contribute efficiently to strengthening the democratic process. New spaces and initiatives will be created to favor participation, objectivity and respect for all political forces, which in turn will guarantee communication between the candidates and the citizens and the launching of their platforms and points of view on the most relevant concerns prevailing in the country.’

Given the presence of social and political pressure in 1994, it was possible to include in the General Board of the *Instituto Federal Electoral* (IFE) ordinary citizens who did not belong to any political party. Even though this body continued to be presided over by the Ministry of Internal Affairs – meaning the Executive power –, opposing political forces also managed to enter into an agreement with

the Institute to organize the presidential debates and broadcast them on national television and radio. Finally, for the first time in Mexico, two debates of this nature were held on May 11 and 12, 1994. The first one was among the three candidates from minor parties and the second, among the three candidates from the major parties. Since then, and up until 2012, there were a total of eight televised presidential election debates, two per six-year period, which were mostly organized by electoral authorities (1994, 2000, 2006 and 2012). In 2012, for the first time, there was also a debate organized by a citizens' youth movement known as *#YoSoy132* ('I am 132'), which was transmitted over the Internet and provided an opportunity for the candidates to enter into a dialogue with university students.

2.1 The presidential election debate in Mexico on May 12, 1994

In the spirit of the 'Pact for Peace, Democracy and Justice', on January 27, 1994 leaders from various political groups held meetings with state authorities to reach an agreement on reforms in electoral laws. Within this framework two debates were organized among the presidential candidates. Due to the political and historical importance of these debates, I selected the second debate, which took place on May 12, 1994, and have contrasted it with one of the presidential election debates during the 2012 electoral process referred to in Section 2.2.

The presidential election debate in Mexico on May 12, 1994 was broadcast on the national network by the National Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry and was held at the Museum of Technology in Chapultepec, the most important public park in Mexico City. As already mentioned, at that time space available in the mass media was practically non-existent for opposition parties and their leaders. Thus the 1994 electoral debates were an excellent opportunity (almost the only one) for the presidential candidates to divulge their campaign platform to the citizens. They therefore did not limit their efforts to mere debating among themselves. Considerable interest was shown by the public. It was indeed estimated that some forty million spectators tuned in.¹

On this particular occasion the participants of the debate were candidates Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano from the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party), an opposition party from the left; Diego Fernández de Cevallos, from the PAN (National Action Party), an opposition party from the right; Ernesto Zedillo Ponce

¹ According to a poll carried out by Ricardo Peña and Rosario Toledo, published in May 1994 in the *Semanario de política y cultura "etcetera"* (in Becerra et al. 2000: 341–342).

de León, from the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), the party in power, and the moderator, Mayté Noriega.

This debate lasted for 1h 26' 2" according to the structure shown in Table 1. In the left-hand column the discursive acts structure of the debate as agreed to by the political parties and electoral authorities is laid out. The last column, to the extreme right, sets out the discursive acts actually uttered. For example, while the second segment of the first part of the debate was supposed to be exclusively argumenta-

Table 1: Structure of the Mexican presidential election debate, May 12, 1994 (Vázquez Laslop 2014: 1882).

Regulated discursive act	Minutes	Speaker* - #Turn-talk	Discursive act(s) actually uttered
Welcome			
Preliminary (description of the rules of the debate by the moderator)			
First part			
Proposal	8	CC-1	Proposal & Argumentation
	8	EZ-1	Proposal
	8	DF-1	Proposal & Argumentation
Argumentation	5	EZ-2	Proposal
	5	DF-2	Argumentation
	5	CC-2	Argumentation
Argumentation	3	DF-3	Argumentation
	3	CC-3	Argumentation
	3	EZ-3	Argumentation & Proposal
Second part			
Proposal	5	CC-4	Proposal & Argumentation
	5	EZ-4	Proposal
	5	DF-4	Argumentation & Proposal
Argumentation	3	EZ-5	Proposal
	3	DF-5	Proposal
	3	CC-5	Argumentation
Argumentation	3	DF-6	Proposal
	3	CC-6	Argumentation
	3	EZ-6	Argumentation & Proposal
Third part			
Conclusion	3	CC-7	Proposal
	2	EZ-7	Proposal
	1	EZ-8	Proposal
	3	DF-7	Argumentation & Proposal

*CC = Candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas; EZ = Candidate Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León;
DF = Candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos.

tive in nature (that is, debate style), candidate Ernesto Zedillo (EZ) decided to use his turn to set forth campaign promises. All turns were allocated by the moderator.

2.2 The presidential election debate in Mexico on June 10, 2012

The 2012 electoral process included three debates among the candidates for the presidency of the nation: two were organized by the previously existing IFE, according to electoral legislation, and one was organized by the citizens' youth movement *#YoSoy132* ('I am 132'). All four candidates participated in the official debates, but in the one organized by the citizens, only three took part, since the candidate from the PRI, which at that time was the opposition, refused to participate. By 2012 electoral legislation regulated the organization of these debates and their national dissemination in the mass media. As a matter of fact, in accordance with IFE guidelines, a special commission composed of electoral authorities and representatives of the candidates to the presidency was set up, in order to agree to the format of both debates (Otálora Malassis 2014: 16).

The second televised presidential election debate in 2012 – which is analyzed here – was broadcast on June 10, for the first time outside Mexico City, at the Expo Convention Center in Guadalajara, the capital of the state of Jalisco. This time the following candidates participated: Gabriel Quadri de la Torre, representing the New Alliance Party; Andrés Manuel López Obrador, for the coalition of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, the Workers Party, and Citizens' Movement Party; Enrique Peña Nieto, representing the coalition of the Institutional Revolutionary Party and the Green Ecological Party of Mexico; and Josefina Vázquez Mota, for the National Action Party.

This debate lasted 2h 32' 4" and adhered strictly to the structure outlined in Table 2. In comparison to the 1994 debate it was more complex. In Table 2, letters A to D correspond to each of the participating candidates according to the section in question. Assignment of the letters was by draw in the preliminary stage, both for the opening turns in the thematic sections of the debate, as well as in the order of turns in the closing phase. The results of the draw were the following.

- Opening and final turns of the thematic sections: A, Gabriel Quadri de la Torre; B, Enrique Peña Nieto; C, Andrés Manuel López Obrador; D, Josefina Vázquez Mota.
- Order in the conclusion turns: A, Andrés Manuel López Obrador; B, Gabriel Quadri de la Torre; C, Enrique Peña Nieto; D, Josefina Vázquez Mota.

Throughout the debate, each turn for the candidates could last up to 2' 30". During the thematic sections of the debate, the total turn-taking time of each candidate

Table 2: Structure of the Mexican presidential election debate, June 10, 2012.

Preliminary: Salutation and description of the rules of the debate by the moderator.						
Section	Opening turn	Medial turn	Medial turn	Closing turn	Time per candidate	Time per section
Opening	A	B	C	D	2' 30"	10' 00"
Debate	B	A – B – C – D ↔		C	8' 30"	34' 00"
Debate	C	A – B – C – D ↔		B	8' 30"	34' 00"
Debate	D	A – B – C – D ↔		A	8' 30"	34' 00"
Conclusion	A	B	C	D	2' 30"	10' 00"
Closing: Thanks and farewell						

altogether could be up to 8' 30". For their turn in these sections, the candidates had to request the floor from the moderator by raising their hand. Once the moderator recognized him or her, the candidate could not speak for more than 2' 30" and this time allotment was subtracted from the 8' 30" they were entitled to in each thematic section. If the candidate did not use up the full-time allotment, the remaining time could not be used later. This dynamic aspect is represented by the curved arrow (↔) in the average turns of each thematic section of the debate.

3 The study of forms of address in electoral debates

3.1 The referents of the forms of address in electoral debates: some studies

Forms of address have been dealt with in various studies on political debates, some of which are electoral in nature. I would like to mention some of those that have paid special attention to the relationship between forms of address and their deictic referents.

It is common practice to take as a point of departure the principles governing deixis discussed in Jespersen (1924), Bühler (1982 [1934]), Jakobson (1971 [1957]) or Benveniste (1979). These principles assume that the meaning of personal pronouns only takes place in a communicative situation. *I* means the person who is speaking and *you* the interlocutor; in other words, the discourse participants in Jakobson's

terms. What is understood as social deixis, following Levinson (1983), broadens the scope of study to all those forms that codify the identity of the discourse participants, their relationship to each other, or between one of them and other entities they refer to (1983: 89).

For example, Zupnik (1994) has designated what she calls the discursive space and situates within it the position of the participants in a communicative situation of political discourse, with poles for the opponents, the audience and the moderator. In this space, she adds to the 'discursive role' of the participants their 'political role' and their 'cultural role'. Within this framework, forms of address are linguistic indicators of the discursive space. She also analyzes persuasive strategies and image building used by the participants. Following a conversational analysis approach, Blas Arroyo (2000) also centers his attention on a presidential debate in Spain with three reference domains: the world of the speaker, the world of the interlocutor, and the world shared by them.

Reference as related to forms of address, seen as units of social deixis systems, moves within the realm of what Bühler (1982 [1934]) has called the demonstrative field of language, different from the symbolic field, which is more in keeping with the representative function of language. The demonstrative field is configured based on the subjective axes of the speaker and intersubjective considerations between him/her and the listener. Therefore the referential space is interpersonal (see Lyons 1995: Chap. 10). It follows that for the case of forms of address, reference is indicating or pointing to an interlocutor or discourse participant (see De Cock 2014).

We can add to this the fact that in electoral debates verbal strategies employed by the adversaries are aimed at attacking their opponents, defending themselves, and persuading electors to vote instead for them, offering acclaims that stress the benefit of such a decision (Benoit 2007, 2014; Blas Arroyo 2011; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2017). Therefore, most researchers who analyze forms of address in these communicative situations attempt to account for their strategic uses.

On the one hand, it is important to mention those studies that revolve around the *transgressive* uses of grammatical paradigms as related to personal pronouns. For example, Bull & Fetzer (2006) believe that it is necessary to analyze the context of forms of address in political discourse since their reference is an inferred meaning. De Cock (2009) compares what she categorizes as subjective and intersubjective uses of the first and second persons in the singular and plural in colloquial and political discourse in Peninsular Spanish. Proctor & Su (2011) refer to political discourse in the United States and Roitman (2014) to the 2012 debate between Hollande and Sarkozy in France, and they also analyze the first person plural. In the case of Roitman, she examines it as a strategy to reinforce *ethos*, or the good image of the candidate who is speaking. Vertommen (2013)

analyzes the inclusive and exclusive uses of *wij* ('we') in Flemish by government officials and by members of opposition parties on talk shows in Belgium. Kuo (2002) compares the use of the second person singular *ni* in two debates in China. She found that in the first debate this pronoun is directed at the audience with greater frequency, a sign of solidarity with the electorate, while in the second debate the pronoun is directed at the opponents, so it has a conflicting value.

On the other hand, several studies deal with nominal forms of address that are usually employed by politicians in debates, but they are less numerous than studies on grammatical forms. Beyond political discourse, the need to study nominal forms of address had been proposed in the mid-20th century by Brown & Ford (1964) in an attempt to understand the principles of use according to certain diads of interlocutors. Zwicky (1971) had already proposed a categorization of vocative functions. In fact, in principle one might think that reference to nominal forms belongs to the world of Bühler's (1982 [1934]) symbolic field of language. But Dickey (1997), for example, questioned why certain nominal forms become forms of address or forms that acquire a social meaning which is not necessarily associated with their literal meaning, particularly in a language such as English, which at present does not have a grammatical system that separates formal terms of address from informal ones. In her study she distinguishes three types of meanings: the "address meaning", determined by its usage as a form of address; the "referential meaning", determined by its usage when referring to people or things (that is, in "non-address contexts"), and the "lexical meaning", which includes the two previous meanings (Dickey 1997: 256). A specific study of the ideological use and legitimation of nominal forms in electoral debates was authored by Jaworski & Galasiński (2000).

For the study of reference in forms of address in electoral debates, I follow De Fina's recommendation (1995: 403). She argues that to understand the pragmatic implications of the selection of the pronouns used in a given text, it is necessary to take into account the totality of these forms used in the text. In this way it will be possible to first identify the stable referents that correspond to the consistent use of certain pronouns and later identify their connections with the other referents of other pronominal and non-pronominal forms.

3.2 Formal and functional categories

The quantitative study of forms of address used in the presidential election debates of 1994 and 2012 in Mexico is covered in Sections 4 through 7. I analyze absolute and relative frequencies of the data included, according to the categories referred to in this section and defined in Vázquez Laslop (2019a, 2019b) to

answer the questions set out in Section 4.2 below. In general, these questions attempt to identify the referents of grammatical and nominal forms of address used in both debates and to determine if there are differences between these two political moments.

By *forms of address* I understand those linguistic forms whose meaning is in keeping with an indication or pointing to by the addresser of an interlocutor in a communicative situation and whose function is to address this interlocutor. An interlocutor can be the addresser him/herself.

By *referent* of a form of address item I understand the interlocutor pointed to by this item. The referent is therefore always a discourse participant, although s/he might never take the floor. I am thinking, in this case, of the spectators within the communicative situation known as a “televised debate”, whose identity is configured as “citizens”, “potential voters”, “members of society” or “Mexicans”, and so on by the participants entitled to take the floor (*ratified participants*, following Goffman 1981; i.e., the political candidates or the moderator of the debate).

I divide the analytical categories according to a formal criterion and a functional criterion of a pragmatic nature. Given that these are Mexican debates, the *formal categories* refer to those that form part of Mexican Spanish.

Person: first, second and third. All have number: singular and plural. In Mexican Spanish there are two systems for the second person, one of which is informal, and whose nominative pronoun is *tú* (T-forms hereafter) and a formal system, *usted* (V-forms hereafter). The form *ustedes* – the second person plural – neutralizes this opposition (T~V-forms hereafter). The system of person in Spanish is present in several grammatical categories and not exclusively with nominative, accusative and dative pronouns. It can also be found in possessives and in verbal inflection. Note that Spanish is a *pro-drop* language, where the governing subject may not be overtly expressed.

Nominal categories: proper and common names. Proper names are classified as “first name + last name”, “title + name (first name + last name or only the last name)” and, finally, “first name”.

The *appellative categories* as defined in Vázquez Laslop (2019a, 2019b), which I reproduce here, have been characterized and exemplified in the 1994 and 2012 debates. These include:

Vocative: any item (deictic or non-deictic) which functions as an appellative, with no syntactic function, as in example (1).

- (1) *Usted*, no sólo eso, *señor*; usted además de que se presenta hoy como tolerante, respetuoso y, podríamos decirlo, simpático frente a los estudiantes, no les dice que usted hizo una ley, en Michoacán, que realmente vulnera la

dignidad, no sólo de los estudiantes, sino de todo un pueblo. (DF-016-0299-4/5, 1994)²

'You, not only that, *sir*. In addition to presenting yourself today as tolerant, respectful and, we might even add, likeable, to the students, you aren't telling them that you passed a law, in Michoacán, that truly violates the dignity, not only of students, but of an entire people.'

Second person: a second person item functioning as an appellative, with syntactic function, as in example (2).

- (2) Yo *te* pregunto a *ti* si a doce años de haber dado pasos en la transición democrática de nuestro país, hoy *estás* mejor y la respuesta, seguro estoy, es que no. (P-014-0292-1/2, 2012)

'I am asking *you* whether or not, twelve years after having taken steps in the democratic transition of our country, *you are* better off today. The answer, I am sure, is no.'

Deictic pro second person: a non-second deictic item functioning as second person, with appellative and syntactic functions, illustrated in example (3).

- (3) Le voy a pedir a Gabriel, Gabriel Quadri de Alatorre que haga lo propio. *Empezamos* de este lado, Gabriel, y *pasamos* inmediatamente a mostrarlo. Es la letra "A". Significa que es el primero que participa en este debate. (S-001-059-01, S-001-060-01, 2012)

'I'm going to ask Gabriel, Gabriel Quadri de Alatorre, to do it himself. *We start* on this side, Gabriel, and *we will go* right on to show it. It's the letter "A". That means he's the first to participate in this debate.'

Narrated³ pro-deictic:⁴ a non-deictic item functioning as an indirect appellative, with syntactic function, shown in example (4).

² The code at the end of each example indicates: Speaker-Turn_talk-Line_number-Item_number, year of debate.

³ I take this term from Jakobson's distinction between *participants of the speech event* versus *participants of the narrated event* (1971 [1957]: 133).

⁴ *Pro-deictic* is the term proposed by Hammermüller (2010: 514). See also Bühler (1982 [1934]: 147, footnote 1).

- (4) Yo sí le pediría a *Andrés Manuel* que nos *explicara* un poquito mejor la aritmética de todas estas a-ahorros que van a promover en México la inversión de manera casi mágica, porque a mí las cuentas, la verdad, no me salen. (Q-028-0496-02/04, Q-028-0497-01, 2012)

'I myself would ask *Andrés Manuel* to explain *his* math to us a little bit better, regarding all these savings that are going to be brought about in Mexico, almost magically through investment, because, according to my calculations, truthfully, they don't add up.'

Inclusive first person plural: a first person plural item functioning as appellative, with syntactic function, addressing the addresser and addressee(s), as illustrated in example (5).

- (5) Amigas y amigos. Buenas noches. *Estamos* a pocos días de lograr una gran transformación para la vida pública del país. (L-010-217-02, 2012)

'Friends, good evening. *We are* just days away from achieving a huge transformation in the public life of the country.'

Exclusive first person plural: a first person plural item, with syntactic function, meaning the addresser and other(s) individual(s), who are not the addressee(s), as in example (6).

- (6) Desde la oposición, compatriotas, *hemos* logrado en Acción Nacional que el gobierno rectifique. (DF-012-0222-02, 1994)

'From the opposition, my fellow countrymen, *we* at National Action *have gotten* the government to rectify.'

Pluralis maiestatis ('the royal we'): a first person plural item functioning as first person singular, with syntactic function, shown in example (7).

- (7) Todos los candidatos en algún momento, quienes estamos aquí, ahora, frente a ustedes, hemos hablado de limpieza electoral; sin embargo, *nosotros afirmamos* que las elecciones del seis de julio fueron las elecciones más sucias en la historia de nuestro país. (CC-018-0344-01/02, 1994)

'At some time or another, all of the candidates here right now, before you, have talked about a clean election; however, *we contend* that the elections of July 6 were the dirtiest elections in the history of our country.'

Based on these formal and functional categories, I have determined the variables to apply to configuring the data in the quantitative study of forms of address in the 1994 and 2012 debates and which are developed further in the following sections.

4 Forms of address in the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates: corpus and variables

4.1 The corpus of grammatical and nominal forms of address

The corpus of forms of address in the presidential election debates in Mexico in 1994 and 2012 includes the grammatical system of the first, second and third singular and plural persons, as well as common and proper names with one of the interlocutors as referents. The total number of cases per debate is presented in Table 3. As is shown, more than 80% of the items are grammatical forms of address in a similar proportion in both debates.

Table 3: Corpus of the grammatical and nominal forms of address in the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates.

Year	1994		2012		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grammatical items	1,218	84.7	1,734	82.2	2,952	83.2
Noun items	220	15.3	376	17.8	596	16.8
Total items	1,438	100.0	2,110	100.0	3,548	100.0

4.2 Questions and variables

In an exploratory study on the mapping of the distribution of forms of address in the second person and common and proper names (Vázquez Laslop 2019b), I have made the following observations.

Firstly, in the 1994 debate, the second person singular system is limited to the V-forms and nouns are mostly common nouns (59%) and proper nouns with title (26.8%). In contrast to this, in the 2012 debate, the *tú* system (T-forms) appears in 16.7% of the cases, with a relative frequency that is a little higher than the

use of *usted* (V-form), which appears in 16.3% of the cases. In addition, in this debate proper nouns with a title are barely used (5.8%). In a good number of cases only the first and last names are used (39.4%) or only the first name (31.6%), and common nouns are less frequent than in 1994 (18.6%). These data suggest that the forms of address used in the 2012 debates are less formal than in the 1994 debates; therefore, the configuration of intended interpersonal relations by the candidates in the 2012 debate are more horizontal (when using T-forms and proper nouns without title), while the intended relations by the 1994 candidates are more vertical (mostly using V-forms and proper nouns with title).

Secondly, in spite of these results, the exploratory study in Vázquez Laslop (2019b) provided data that could qualify trends regarding the type of pretended interpersonal relations in both debates. By observing the distribution of second person forms of address according to discursive acts, it can be seen that almost half of the occurrences of *tú* in 2012 (48.8%) are used in commissive speech acts – mostly candidates campaign promises expressed as proposals – and a little over one third (36%) in argumentative speech acts. In both debates, more than half of the singular V-forms (*usted*) appears in argumentative speech acts (64.9% in 1994 and 51.6% in 2012). These comparisons suggest, on the one hand, that those addressed with *tú* are the citizens, to whom the candidates direct their campaign promises with commissive speech acts; on the other hand, that those addressed with *usted* are the candidates, who are involved in a verbal duel with argumentative speech acts.

These observations call for a closer look at the targets of the forms of address used in the 1994 and 2012 debates. To this end, I will cross-tabulate the following variables for each debate and contrast the results: a) the referent by grammatical person, which includes the first, second and third persons; b) the referent by noun category, which calls for common nouns and the types of proper nouns used, and c) the referent by appellative function.

5 Addressing referents in the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates: the form

5.1 The referents of forms of address by grammatical person

Table 4 shows the absolute and relative frequency distribution of the items by debate (1994 and 2012) in the whole corpus, according to grammatical person. Remember that Spanish is a *pro-drop* language, so these items belong to diverse

Table 4: Grammatical person of forms of address in the 1994 and 2012 debates (N = 3,548).

	1994		2012	
	N	%	N	%
1SG	362	25.2	688	32.6
1PL	441	30.7	487	23.1
2SG-T	0	0.0	125	5.9
2SG-V	185	12.9	122	5.8
2PL-T-V	94	6.5	124	5.9
3SG	117	8.1	134	6.3
3PL	19	1.3	54	2.6
Noun	220	15.3	376	17.8
TOTAL	1,438	100.0	2,110	100.0

grammatical categories: pronouns in the nominative, accusative and dative cases, possessives, and verbal inflexions. Table 4 includes all the nominal forms.

The first person is by far the most frequent in both debates. In the 1994 debate, the plural includes a third of the overall number of items (30.7%) and the singular, a quarter (25.2%). The opposite pattern emerges in 2012, when the first person singular represents a little more than a third of all occurrences (32.6%) and the plural reaches almost a quarter (23.1%). One might think that in both debates the nominal forms would be the second most frequently used form of address (15.3% and 17.8%), but this only holds true for the 1994 debate, when the second person reaches a total of nearly a fifth of all occurrences (19.4%, all second person forms). In the 2012 debate, nominal items only surpass by a couple of decimals the total occurrences of the second person (17.8% and 17.6%, respectively). What is particularly noteworthy, contrasting both debates, is that the second person forms are more diversified in 2012 than in 1994. While usage in 1994 is relatively more frequent for the singular form, all the items are used exclusively with *usted* (V-forms), with 12.9%. In the 2012 debate – as though this percentage were split into two –, the singular forms of the second person represent 5.9% for T-forms and 5.8% for V-forms.

Tables 5 and 6 display the details of the referents of the grammatical forms of address employed in both debates. The percentages are calculated according to the total number of items found in each debate: 1,438 in 1994 and 2,110 in 2012.

Table 5, which refers to the 1994 debate, shows that the candidates and the moderator are referents for the first person singular in 40% or more of the items. We also observe that ‘everybody’ (mainly the Mexican people, including

Table 5: Referents and grammatical forms of address by person in the 1994 debate (N = 1,438).

	1SG	1PL	2SG-T	2SG-V	2PL-T-V	3SG	3PL
Candidate (793)	53 44.5%	63 7.9%	0	179 22.6%	2 0.2%	101 12.7%	6 0.8%
Moderator (20)	8 40.0%	0	0	3 15.0%	0	2 10.0%	0
People (159)	0	5 3.1%	0	3 1.9%	85 53.5%	0	5 3.1%
Candidates (71)	0	25 35.2%	0	0	6 8.4%	11 15.5%	8 11.3%
Everybody (332)	0	293 88.2%	0	0	1 0.3%	0	0
Cand* & Party (62)	0	54 87.1%	0	0	0	0	3 4.8%
IFE** et al. (1)	0	1 100.0%	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	362	441	0	185	94	117	19

*Candidate; **Instituto Federal Electoral.

Table 6: Referents and grammatical forms of address by person in the 2012 debate (N = 2,110).

	1SG	1PL	2SG-T	2SG-V	2PL-T-V	3SG	3PL
Candidate (1241)	635 51.2%	88 7.1%	10 0.8%	104 8.4%	1 0.1%	117 9.4%	0
Moderator (81)	49 60.5%	8 9.9%	0	1 1.2%	0	0	0
People (271)	1 0.4%	9 3.3%	115 42.4%	17 6.3%	82 30.3%	5 1.8%	13 4.8%
Candidates (137)	1 0.7%	29 21.2%	0	0	37 27.0%	11 8.0%	38 27.7%
Everybody (356)	1 0.3%	334 93.8%	0	0	4 1.1%	1 0.3%	0
Cand* & Party (20)	1 5.0%	16 80.0%	0	0	0	0	3 15.0%
IFE** et al. (4)	0	3 75.0%	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	688	352	58	50	51	39	28

*Candidate; **Instituto Federal Electoral.

the participants in the debate) or the candidates as members of their political party, are referents for the first person plural in about 90% of the cases. To a lesser degree (35.2%), the participating candidates as a whole are also referents of the first person plural. With respect to the second person, the V-form mostly has as referent a candidate (179 cases out of 185; 97.0%). Thus, after the first person singular, each candidate with the second person singular is the intended interlocutor of one of the participants in the debate in a little over a fifth of the cases (22.6%). Finally, the referents of the second person plural are almost exclusively the electorate or Mexican people, with 85 out of the 94 items (90.4%). From another point of view, the people are considered to be the whole set of addressees (*ustedes*, T~V-form) in 53.5% of the cases, much higher than as referents of the other personal plural forms (first and third in both cases, with 3.1%).

The items belonging to grammatical forms of address in the 2012 debate are distributed by referent and by person in Table 6. Both the candidates and the moderator refer to themselves in the first person singular in more than half of the items (51.2% and 60.5%, respectively). Everybody and the candidates as members of their respective political parties are referents for the first person plural (93.8% and 80%, respectively). The electorate or Mexicans are individual referents for *tú* with 42.4% or, as a group, for *ustedes* to a lesser degree, in 30.3% of the cases. Each candidate is the addressee of some form of the second person singular at a much lower frequency: 8.4% with the V-form and 0.8% with the T-form. The candidates, taken as a whole, are categorized as the second person plural in 27% of the cases, as occurred with the third person plural (27.7% of the cases).

5.2 Referents and nominal forms of address

In this section I examine in greater detail the types of nominal forms of address used in both debates, which, as shown in Table 4, encompassed 15.3% of the total number of forms of address used in 1994 and 17.8% in 2012. Table 7 shows the absolute and relative frequencies of the items from the 1994 debate and Table 8, those from the 2012 debate. As in the categorization of grammatical forms of address, the percentages are calculated according to the total number of items found in each debate: 1,438 in 1994 and 2,110 in 2012.

In the 1994 debate, when nominal reference is made to one of the candidates, a title is included with the proper noun (first name plus last name or only last name, 6.7%), or even with a common noun (4%). On the other hand, the few nominal references made to the moderator are just first name, without a last name or title (30%). When a nominal reference is made to the people or the candidates as a whole, it is with a common noun above all (38.4% and 19.7%, respectively).

Table 7: Referents and nominal forms of address by category in the 1994 debate (N = 1,438).

	First name + last name		Title + proper noun		First name		Common noun	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Candidate (793)	0	0	53	6.7	0	0	32	4.0
Moderator (20)	0	0	0	0	6	30.0	1	5.0
People (159)	0	0	0	0	0	0	61	38.4
Candidates (71)	0	0	5	7.0	0	0	14	19.7
Everybody (332)	0	0	1	0.3	0	0	22	6.6
Cand* & Party (62)	3	4.8	0	0	0	0	2	3.2
IFE** et al. (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Candidate; **Instituto Federal Electoral.

Table 8: Referents and nominal forms of address by category in the 2012 debate (N = 2,110).

	First name + last name		Title + proper noun		First name		Common noun	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Candidate (1241)	145	11.7	21	1.7	101	8.1	18	1.4
Moderator (81)	3	3.7	0	0	18	22.2	2	2.5
People (271)	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	10.7
Candidates (137)	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	11.7
Everybody (356)	0	0	1	0.3	0	0	9	2.5
Cand* & Party (20)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IFE** et al. (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	25.0

*Candidate; **Instituto Federal Electoral.

In the 2012 debate, as shown in Table 8, a good part of nominal reference directed at each candidate involves use of the first and last name without a title (11.7%), or of simply the first name (8.1%). On the other hand, the moderator is most frequently called by his first name (22.2%) and only exceptionally by his first and last name (3.7%). Nominal reference directed at the people and the candidates as a whole is especially with the use of common nouns (10.7% and 11.7%, respectively).

6 Addressing referents in the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates: the appellative function

This section provides details on the ways of addressing each type of referent in each of the presidential debates. Table 9 presents the absolute and relative frequencies of the items of grammatical and nominal forms of address used in the 1994 debate, and Table 10 shows the frequencies for the 2012 debate.

Table 9: Referents and forms of address by appellative functions in the 1994 debate (N= 1,438).

	Candidate	Moderator	People	Candidate(s)	Everybody	Cand* & Party	IFE** et al.
Vocative	40 5.0%	6 30.0%	52 32.7%	2 2.8%	3 0.9%	0	0
2nd	181 22.8%	3 15.0%	88 55.3%	6 8.4%	1 0.3%	0	0
Prodeixis	1 0.1%	0	0	3 4.2%	0	1 1.6%	0
Narrated	155 19.6%	3 15.0%	14 8.8%	35 49.3%	34 10.2%	7 11.3%	0
1SG	353 44.5%	8 40.0%	0	0	1 0.3%	0	0
1PL inclusive	0	0	5 3.1%	10 14.1%	268 80.7%	5 8.1%	0
1PL exclusive	0	0	0	15 21.1%	25 7.5%	49 79.0%	1 100.0%
1PL maiestatic	63 7.9%	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	793	20	159	71	332	62	1

*Candidate; **Instituto Federal Electoral.

Table 10: Referents and forms of address by appellative functions in the 2012 debate (N= 2,110).

	Candidate	Moderator	People	Candidate(s)	Everybody	Cand*.& Party	IFE** et al.
Vocative	157 12.6%	19 23.4%	4 1.5%	2 1.4%	1 0.3%	0	0
2nd	115 9.3%	1 1.2%	214 79%	37 27.0%	4 %	0	0
Prodeixis	15 1.2%	0	11 4.0%	22 16.1%	1 0.3%	0	1 25.0%
Narrated	233 18.8%	4 4.9%	32 11.8%	46 33.6%	14 3.9%	1 5.0%	1 25.0%
1SG	635 51.2%	49 60.5%	1 0.4%	1 0.7%	1 0.3%	1 5.0%	0
1PL inclusive	0	0	8 2.9%	5 3.7%	327 91.8%	0	0
1PL exclusive	0	0	1 0.4%	21 15.3%	7 2.0%	16 80%	2 50.0%
1PL maiestatic	81 6.5%	8 9.9%	0	1 0.7%	0	0	0
TOTAL	1241***	81	271	137*	356*	20*	4

*Candidate; **Instituto Federal Electoral; ***9 items, no data.

In both debates the most frequent items are the first person singular with respect to other grammatical persons (25.2% in 1994 and 32.6% in 2012; see Table 4 above); this is reflected in Tables 9 and 10 with 44.5% in 1994 and 51.2% in 2012 with regard to these items. In the 1994 debate each candidate is addressed in the second person with a syntactic function in 22.8% of the cases, and in 19.6% of cases, each candidate receives indirect treatment with pro-deictic narrated forms. In fact, when the appellation is to candidates as a group, they receive pro-deictic indirect treatment in 49.3% of the cases. Those who receive the most direct treatment in this debate are the citizens, with appellations in the second person (55.3%) or with vocatives (32.7%). As expected, the inclusive *nos* is directed at everybody (80.7%) and the exclusive *nos* to the candidate together with his political followers (79.0%).

In the 2012 debate, from the figures in Table 10, and without counting the singular first person, each candidate receives more indirect than direct appellations. Some 18.8% of the items are categorized as pro-deictic forms, while the direct items did not surpass this figure: 12.6% are vocatives and 9.3% represent the syntactic second person. The appellations to the candidates as a group account

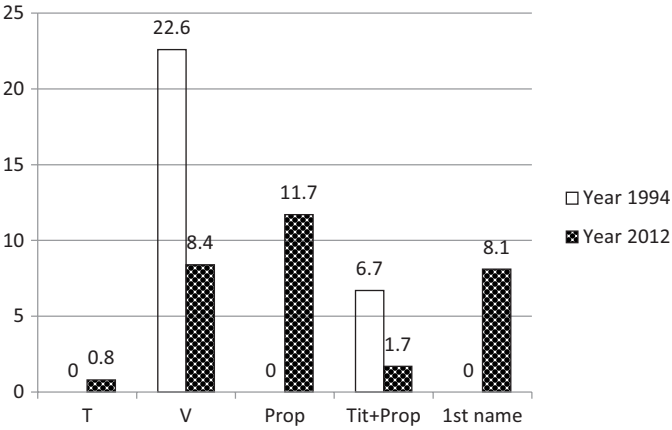
for more than a third of the pro-deictic narrated items (33.6%), followed by the second person with a syntactic function (27.0%) and pro-deictic accounting for 16.1% of the occurrences. The people are addressed predominantly in the second person with a syntactic function (79.0%). As was the case of the 1994 debate, the inclusive *nos* is reserved for everybody (91.8%) and the exclusive *nos*, for the candidate and his political faction (80.0%).

7 Contrasts in the uses of forms of address between the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates

With these results we are closer to answering the question of whether or not there are differences between the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates with regard to the nature of interpersonal relations the participants intended to project through forms of address. In other words, whether or not the more frequent use of informal addressing systems in the 2012 debate than in the 1994 debate can be taken as an indicator of the linguistic configuration of more horizontal versus vertical interpersonal relations, respectively.

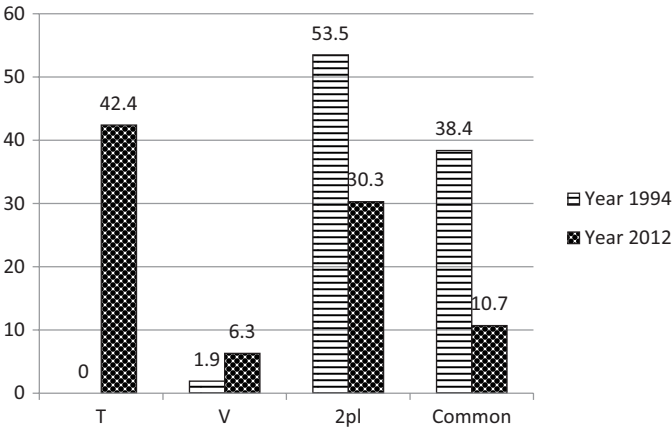
Graphs 1 and 2 highlight some of the most noteworthy contrasts from the point of view of the form used in both debates.⁵ According to Mexican culture, addressing someone by his or her title plus last name and with V-forms is more formal than by a proper noun without title and V-forms. However, addressing someone this latter way still suggests some formality. An informal approach is to address a person by only his or her first name combined with T-forms. Graph 1 focuses on grammatical items whose referents were the individual candidates. As the graph attests, T-forms are barely used to refer to any candidate in the 2012 debate. If in the 1994 debate the use of the V-forms is more frequent to address each candidate, in 2012 greater use is made of the first plus last name (proper noun). Thus, from a grammatical point of view each candidate in the 2012 debate is addressed in a less formal way than in 1994, but address practices are still formal, as candidates tend to be addressed more often by a proper noun than was the case in 1994, which is quite clearly very formal in nature, with the use of

⁵ This information may change pending the submission of the data to relevant statistical tests to establish significant differences between both debates. An inferential statistical study will be the subject of next phase of the overall study once the remaining data from 2000 and 2006 debates have been included.



Graph 1: Candidates: Percent by grammatical person and nominal categories in the 1994 and 2012 debates.

Prop = Proper noun; Tit+Prop = Title plus proper noun.



Graph 2: The people: Percent of grammatical persons and nominal categories in the 1994 and 2012 debates.

Common = common noun.

title plus last name and V-forms. I will come back to this issue at the end of this section.

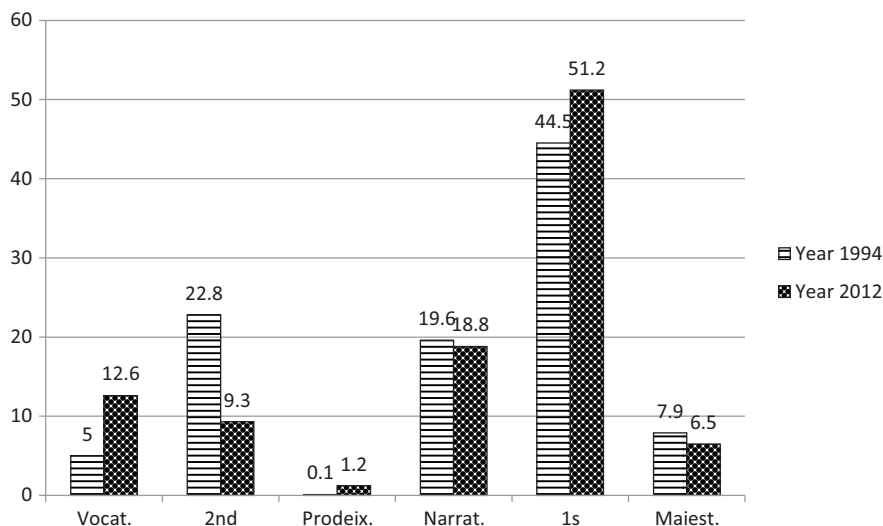
Graph 2 compares ways of addressing citizens or the people in general (Mexicans, voters, women, youth, heads of family, etc.) in the two debates. In 2012 Mexicans are addressed with the T-form more often than the candidates involved in the debate. As a matter of fact, direct addressing is also more frequent in 1994

with the second person plural, which neutralizes the formal-informal opposition. Perhaps for this very reason it was frequent in the 2012 debate. In 1994, collective forms of address for the people are preferred, not only through the use of *ustedes* (second person plural), but also the frequent use of common nouns.

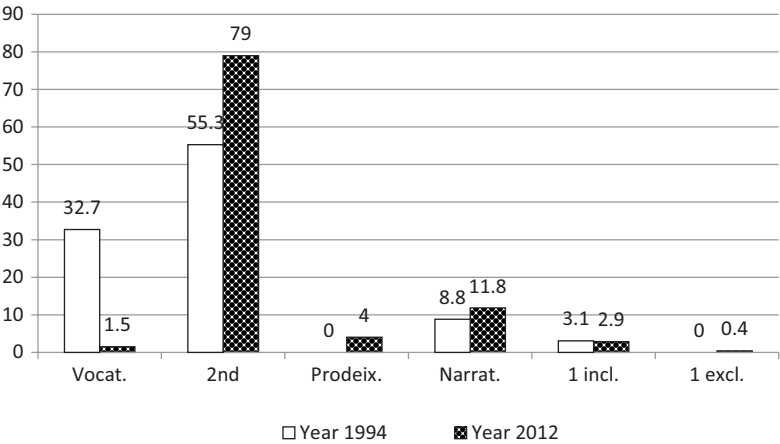
From a functional point of view, the use of forms of address in the 1994 and 2012 presidential debates does not show as much contrast as the grammatical perspective, as represented in Graphs 3 and 4.

The differences in the appellative functions to refer to each candidate between the 1994 and the 2012 debates are limited to direct addressing, that is, vocatives and second person. As shown in Graph 3, the most evident difference is appellation in the second person with a syntactic function, which is more frequent in 1994 than in 2012. On the other hand, in 2012 it is more common for each candidate to address others with vocatives than in 1994. Regarding the remaining appellative functions with reference to each candidate, the pattern is similar in both debates.

If we now observe the appellative functions in Graph 4 from the perspective of the people as a referent, we see a greater difference in the use of vocatives. While in both debates there is a preference to address the people in the second person with syntactic function, in 2012 individual citizens are addressed with deictics much more often than with other appellative functions.



Graph 3: Candidates: Percent of appellative functions in the 1994 and 2012 debates. Vocat. = Vocative; 2nd = second person with syntactic function; Prodeix. = Pro-deixis; Narrat. = Narrated; 1s = first person singular; Maiest. = maiestatic first person plural.



Graph 4: The people: Percent of appellative functions in the 1994 and 2012 debates. Vocat. = Vocative; 2nd = second person with syntactic function; Prodeix. = Pro-deixis; Narrat. = Narrated; 1 incl. = first person plural inclusive; 1 excl. = first person plural exclusive.

Table 11 gives a summary of the different ways in which the referents ‘each candidate’ and ‘the people’ are addressed in the 1994 and 2012 presidential election debates. The Table gives an outline with two addressing system parameters for the items I have mentioned in this section: one is a *direct-indirect* parameter by appellative function, and the other an *informal-formal* one by grammatical forms. On the appellative function parameter, the vocatives and the second person singular with syntactic function are found on the [+Direct] boundary;

Table 11: Summary of the form and function parameters for types of addressing the referents “each candidate” and “the people” in the 1994 and 2012 presidential-election debates.

	Each candidate		The people (individuals)	
	Form	Function	Form	Function
1994	– V [+Formal]	– 2SG [+Direct]	– 2PL [I~F]	– Narrated [+Indirect]
	– Title+Proper noun [+Formal]	– Narrated [+Indirect]	– Common Noun	
2012	– Proper Noun [±Formal]	– Narrated [+Indirect]	– T [+Informal]	– 2SG [+Direct]
	– V [+Formal]	– Vocative [+Direct]	– 2PL [I~F]	
	– First name [+Informal]			

the plural deictic forms in the center, and the narrated pro-deictic forms on the [+Indirect] boundary. On the grammatical forms parameter, the T-forms and the first names are located on the [+Informal] boundary; proper nouns without a title in the center, tending toward formality [$\pm$ Formal], and the V-forms together with proper nouns with a title on the [+Formal] boundary. From the point of view of formal addressing, the second person plural is neutral ([I~F]). Common nouns, given their meanings and connotations, can tend toward formality or informality; it is therefore not possible to arrive at a generalization in this category.

8 Conclusion

Debates among presidential candidates in Mexico were not incorporated into the electoral system until the last decade of the 20th century, but have now become an essential part of the democratic process. On the one hand, there is regulation for the organization of these debates in electoral legislation and, on the other, these rules were strictly applied to all electoral processes between 1994 and 2012.

The linguistic study of the forms of address used in the presidential election debates broadcast in 1994 and 2012 provides elements that allow us to identify the diversity of interpersonal configurations intended mainly by the ratified participants among the opposing candidates, the moderators, electoral authorities, citizens, the electorate and social groups. One of these linguistic elements are the referents of the forms of address, which match the addressees pointed to by the forms of address themselves, since they serve an appellative function each time they are used.

Given the study's objective to contrast the configuration of the interlocutors as referents by means of the forms of address used by the candidates in the 1994 and 2012 debates, consideration was given on the one hand to grammatical aspects of the forms of address, and on the other, to their appellative functions.

With regard to each candidate as a referent, the most important differences were in form, and there was a certain coincidence in functions. From the functional point of view, in both debates each candidate was predominantly addressed directly – in 1994 in the second person with a syntactic function, and in 2012 with vocatives. In both debates each candidate was also addressed indirectly. With respect to form, while in 1994 only the formal system was used to refer to each candidate, in 2012 neutral or informal forms emerged, especially nominal forms.

The most important formal and functional differences in the forms of address used in both debates were in the appellations used to address the people. While in 1994 Mexicans were addressed indirectly as a collectivity with common nouns

or neutrally with second person plural forms, in 2012 they were predominantly addressed with the second person singular form as part of the informal system, or the neutral second person plural.

For the study of forms of address in any electoral debate it is important to include a multidimensional linguistic analysis of the addressees as referents, in order to obtain an extended panorama of the interpersonal relationships configured by the political participants, by means of these social deictic unities.

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