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REFLECTIONS OF GENDER AND ADDRESS IN LANGUAGE USE: THE CULTURALLY DRIVEN MOTIVATION OF THE USES OF SPANISH OBLIQUE PRONOUNS LE AND LO

Abstract
This article deals with the problem of different distributions of the Spanish pronouns le and lo ‘him, her, polite you’ (and their morphological variants les, los, la and las) that may be observed in different realms of the Spanish speaking world (geography, sociologically etc.). In this paper, as a starting point, the more established and traditional case theory will be compared with the Control System Hypothesis in a particular corpus of a non-standard, Peninsular variant of Spanish. The hypothesis that will then be tested is that the use of the pronouns under focus in this particular variant, as well as in all variants, is based on one and the same semantic substance, but that (groups of) speakers may apply this substance for different communicative needs, resulting in different distributions of the forms in different language samples of the respective (groups of) speakers. These differences, then, are not representative of different meanings, but may be representing cultural differences of the respective speech group. The case in focus is middle-class Spanish of the 60s as represented in a novel by Miguel Delibes, and particularly how men and women are addressed. This corpus was chosen because of its particular, non-standard distribution of the pronouns in question, being therefore of particular interest to test the hypothesis.

Keywords
linguistic variation, linguistic meaning, ethnopragmatics, Spanish oblique pronouns

1 Introduction
The research question addressed in this paper is how pragmatics/communicative strategies may affect the use of oblique third person pronouns in Spanish. These strategies may engage in the non-random distribution of linguistic forms without altering the meanings of the forms. In many linguistic phenomena, we see similar forms in different varieties of languages, or even in different languages, like for
instance the subjunctive mood, or simple past tenses in Romance languages, or, like
the topic of the present study, the use of oblique third person pronouns in different
variants of Spanish. In other words, the claim that is made in this study is that
different distributions of linguistic forms in a grammatical system in different
groups of language users within a linguistic community may not be the result of
different meanings of the relevant forms, but the result of different communicative
strategies of certain linguistic groups, using the same basic meanings of the relevant
forms.¹

This paper is a study in the line of the Columbia School of Linguistics (CSL),
founded by William Diver (1921-1995) and focuses on a much-debated topic in this
line of thinking, namely the oblique Spanish third person pronouns le and lo.² These
pronouns – indications of the third person oblique pronouns that may express
gender, number and case – have been a topic of research since there is a multitude
of variational phenomena to them, both synchronically and diachronically. On many
occasions, a descriptive perspective was chosen, cf. for instance Fernández-Ordóñez
Lapesa (1969) and Flores Cervantes (2006). Other studies have taken a more
functional-communicative approach, in many cases related to CS theory, like García
(1975), García (2009), García and Otheguy (1983), Martínez (2000), Mauder
(2008), and Martínez (2019).

Columbia School (hence: CS) theory takes as its fundamental basis the idea that
language and language structure originate in human behavior, and not, as other
theories do, in innate or autonomous structures. CS theory may be considered as a
radically functional theory since it rejects any kind of motivation that is not related
to the human factor (Contini-Morava 1995; De Jonge 2000, Diver 2012b) and
instead relies on the explanation of linguistic facts by means of principles related to
communication and/or economy, the so-called minimax principle (Tobin 1997: 21).
This principle supposes that these aspects work together in the communicative
strategies of speakers and constitute the two scales of a balance.

Another fundamental aspect of CS theory is that it poses that any formulated
hypothesis concerning the motivation of an observed, non-arbitrary distribution of
the related linguistic forms needs independent empirical support. This support has
to be provided by independent language samples, using objective techniques for the
observation of the linguistic facts (Diver 2012b).³ This study uses this kind of
support for the presented hypotheses.

¹ In this article, we use “meaning” in the sense of Diver 2012b, i.e., a stable, abstract concept that serves
as a hint to the language user. What is traditionally seen as a difference in meaning, due to the context, is
treated as a different interpretation, based on the same, abstract meaning.
² These two forms are representative of the forms le/les and lo/los/las, respectively.
³ We are aware of the fact that the particular corpus we are presenting as the object of study may seem to
be very particular, and therefore not representing an objective perspective on the use of these pronouns.
2 The problem: variation between *le* and *lo*

2.1 Traditional explanations

There are different ways to approach the supposed non arbitrary distribution between *le* and *lo* in all of their forms. In the first place, from a descriptive point of view, the third person pronouns are said to have their origin in Latin, but have shown a ‘tendency to confusion’ between the two forms in the history of Spanish (RAE 2010: 315). On the other hand, it is observed that these forms may appear in two participant situations (the traditional Subject and another participant, in general Direct Object) as well as in three participant situations (Subject, Direct and Indirect object). These situations may be understood as situations in which the use of the forms depends either from their functions in Latin (Accusative, Dative) or from the type/meaning of the verbs (transitive, intransitive) with which they appear. However, both views do not explain the cases of so-called ‘confusion’, generally labeled as *leísmo*, *laísmo* and *loísmo*, nor the particular distribution in certain minimal pairs as discussed in García 1975 and 2009, particularly pp. 55–60, where use of *le* and *lo* are observed under similar syntactic conditions, without apparent difference in meaning.

In this study, we will focus on the variation that exists between *le*/*les* and *la*/*las*, and particularly in the phenomena known as *leísmo* and *laísmo*. Traditional analyses treat this variation as a particularity of certain variants of Spanish and consider them as deviations from the norm. In Fernández-Ordóñez (1999), these phenomena are defined as follows:

La gramática normativa entiende por ‘leísmo’ el uso de la forma *le* en lugar de *lo* (o excepcionalmente *la*) como pronombre para referirse al complemento directo. [...] Por ‘laísmo’ se conoce el empleo de *la* en vez de *le* para el dativo con antecedente femenino, fundamentalmente personal. (1999: 1319)

‘Normative grammar defines ‘leísmo’ as the use of the form *le* instead of *lo* (or exceptionally *la*) as a pronoun to refer to the direct object. [...] ‘Laísmo’ is known as the use of *la* instead of *le* for dative use with feminine antecedent, fundamentally human.’ [translation mine, BdJ]

Fernández-Ordóñez gives two possible explanations for *leísmo*: on the one hand, she observes that the use of singular masculine *le* parallels the demonstrative paradigm in which the masculine singular forms also end in -e: *este* ‘this’ and *ese* ‘that’ (1999: 1319). On the other hand, in Spanish there is a strong tendency to distinguish animate referents from inanimate ones, because of the fact that the major

But the fact that this corpus is not created for the purpose of this study is what is meant here, not its particular use of the pronouns.
part of *le* referents are animate (ibid.). But the author also states that no one of these statements are capable of explaining the entire distribution of the forms, to begin with *leismo*, but also of *laismo* and *loismo*.

Now, *le* not only frequently refers to animate referents, but also has a marked preference for male animate referents. This is a common fact as already observed in older Spanish prescriptive grammar books, that explicitly allow use *le* in canonic *lo* situations particularly for male human referents (RAE 2010: 316). García (1975) goes even further, stating that these facts are a demonstration that ‘within Spanish culture (if not universally), males are socially more highly valued than females’ (1975: 330), as a more specific expression of her later statement that *le* is ‘preferred for socially more highly valued human O[bject]’s’ (García 2009: 60). It is this kind of observations that have led to a meaning-based theory, that not only observes the discrepancies with traditional case theory, but moreover, provides an explanation that may account for, not only the traditional perspective, but also the regularly observed deviations from it.

2.2 Basic semantic values for *le* and *lo* according to CS theory

In this paper, we will be developing further on the hypothesis presented in a number of fundamental studies on this topic (specially García 1975, and García and Otheguy 1983). This hypothesis, also called the Control System Hypothesis, postulates that there is a difference of degree of control between the different participants of an event, expressed in an inflected verb. The traditionally called Subject or Nominative is referred to in CS theory as Participant in Focus (p.i.f.) and has high control over the event and is reflected in the first place in the ending of the inflected verb; the Direct Object or Accusative is Participant without Focus (p.w.f.) with low control over the event and the Indirect Object or Dative is called Peripheral Participant (p.p.) and has intermediate control over the event. The System of Control is presented in Table 1 with the corresponding Spanish oblique third person pronouns.

When combining the indicated meanings in table 1 with the definitions of *leismo* and *laismo* by Ordóñez (1999: 1319) in the light of the statements by García on the higher social status of males (1975: 330), it could be stated that the identification of male human referents with *le* and female human referents with *la* may be interpreted as a product of Spanish machista culture, as male human referents are systematically referred to by *le*, indicating higher control, more active, whereas female human referents are systematically referred to by *la*, indicating low control and least active.

In the field of ethnopragmatics, which has a fundamental basis in Martínez (2000), and an important precursor of ethnopragmatics avant la lettre in García and Otheguy (1983), a new perspective has been created in the study of variation of the pronouns *le* and *lo*. These studies show that the CS control meaning (cf. figure 1) may not only explain the distribution of the third person pronouns in relation to the...
traditional case system (and particularly, the deviations from it), but also explain
new applications of the concepts of control and activity to other, culturally
determined phenomena. García and Otheguy (1983), for example, explains how
these meanings are applied by bilingual speakers in Ecuador while referring to
prestigious interlocutors and female referents, giving new meaningful applications
which would be inexplicable if their particular situations were not taken into
account. Martínez (2000) goes a step further, demonstrating that meanings like high
control and high degree of activity are successfully applied to referents of the
supernatural by bilingual speakers in the North of Argentina.

Table 1: Control system illustrated by the third person Spanish pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional terminology</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Semantic value</th>
<th>Degree of activity by the referent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject/nominative</td>
<td>Verb ending</td>
<td>Participant in focus (p.i.f.)</td>
<td>High Control</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO/dative</td>
<td>Le(s)</td>
<td>Peripheral Participant (p.p.)</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO/accusative</td>
<td>Lo(s), la(s)</td>
<td>Participant without focus (p.w.f.)</td>
<td>Low Control</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These studies are good examples of a special usage procedure, already referred
to by Reid (1991: 93–94) in his analogy of carpenter tools being used for other
purposes than the ones they were originally designed for, like a screwdriver as the
most appropriate, although not ideal, tool for opening paint cans. We will return to
this analogy later.

In the present study, we intend to present linguistic evidence to test the
hypothesis that a functional hypothesis may account for the distribution of the
Spanish oblique third person pronouns in different varieties without having to recur
to different meanings for the competing forms, with special attention for the
phenomena known as *leísmo* and *laísmo*. In order to do so, we have taken a novel
dating from the 60s of the last century that combines the conditions to study these
pronouns, namely *Cinco horas con Mario*, by Miguel Delibes (1966). The novel
consists mainly of an interior monologue by the protagonist, Carmen, who is the
widow of the recently deceased Mario, during a five-hour death wake in which she
reflects on their lives together. Her language use echoes local middle-class Spanish
of the Valladolid area.

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4 For the translations of the relevant examples, we have used the official English translation *Five hours with Mario* (Delibes 1988).
This novel thus reflects spoken middle class Spanish of that period, including the ‘confusing’ uses of the pronouns, frequently signaled by Spanish grammars. In the second place, the novel renders enough examples of the pronouns under focus, which were produced for no other purpose than to tell a story, and not for linguistic purposes, and that is why it can be taken as representative of a specific period and group of speakers of a particular cultural background.5

What we are going to present in this paper is the following. In the first place, we are going to compare the traditional case system with the control system to see which of the two systems is better at explaining the distributions of the forms in our corpus. These will be presented as (1) the Case hypothesis, and (2) the Control System hypothesis. Then we are going to compare the relevant factors of both systems to see whether there is any interdependence between them: e.g., accusative and dative case are factors in the traditional system, and (non) human referents in the control system, and there might be a correlation between the animacy of a referent and their occurrences in case types. This is necessary because we want to know what we are measuring. The next step is to see qualitatively how the observed correlations are reflected in the actual individual examples to see what speakers in our corpus actually do (through the author, obviously).

As a following step we will introduce and test (3) the grammatical-gender-markedness hypothesis, in which the influence of grammatical gender on the distribution of the pronouns and their relation to *laísmo* are analyzed, and finally (4) the sociocultural-markedness-hypothesis, in which the sociocultural weight of the sexes in society will be analyzed. Therefore, we will analyze the referent’s gender and animacy quantitatively, but also qualitatively to support the quantitative results of the distribution of the forms in relation with animacy and gender. All these results will then lead to a conclusion in relation to the hypotheses concerning the distribution of the forms that we will be testing in this paper, and we hope to be able to show that the distribution may reveal a reflection of the social relations between the sexes that Delibes sketches in his text.

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5 We are aware of the limitations that the use of this corpus implies. However, we are not interested in finding ‘the truth’ about the use of the pronouns in Spanish society, but rather pretend to trace the communicative motivations of a representative user of a specific variant of Spanish in order to increase our knowledge of communicative processes in general. The use of a literary source for this kind of research has the advantage over spontaneously produced language samples is that in this particular source, all circumstances are presumably under control, making it similar to laboratory conditions in physics.
3 Analysis of the data
3.1 First quantitative analysis

The first test to be executed is to see if the corpus, that consists of 979 cases and of which almost 63% (613 instances) are cases of le/les, and somewhat over 37% (366 instances) are cases of lo/la/los/las, shows a distribution that corresponds to the case system. In order to do so, we have classified all contexts in which the pronouns occur into accusative or dative, without taking into account the actual form of the pronoun. The traditional prescriptive case-system states that for accusative case, a form of lo should be used, whereas in dative situations, le should be the used form. In table 2 we present the results of the classification in the Delibes corpus.

Table 2: distribution of le and lo according to the Latin case system in Delibes 1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>accusative</th>
<th>dative</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le</td>
<td>213/42,7%</td>
<td>400/83,3%</td>
<td>613/62,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo</td>
<td>286/57,3%</td>
<td>80/16,7%</td>
<td>366/37,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>499/100%</td>
<td>480/100%</td>
<td>979/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 We will be generically referring to these forms using le, except when it is relevant distinguishing between them, for example in qualitative analyses of particular cases.
7 We will be generically referring to these forms using lo, except when it is relevant distinguishing between them, for example in qualitative analyses of particular cases.
8 This is actually more difficult than it appears at first sight. In three-participant situations, like Juan le da el libro (a María) ‘Juan gives her the book (to María)’ it is clear, but in two-participant situations, the second participant can be either accusative or dative. With clearly transitive verbs, such as besar ‘to kiss’ or pegar ‘to hit’, the second participants have been classified as accusatives; in clear intransitive cases, such as venir ‘to come’ or gustar ‘to like’, they were classified as datives. In cases of doubt, the decision of the dictionary was followed, but in cases where dictionaries classified the verb as both transitive and intransitive, like ayudar ‘to help’, we have classified the second participant as accusative, in order to avoid circularity.
9 In the selection of the examples, all cases where the pronoun refers to an undefined referent, like a previous statement (lo sabe ‘s/he knows it’) or a fixed expression in which the pronoun has no referent in the context (pasarlo bien ‘to have a good time’; dale ‘go for it’) were excluded from the corpus, since no analysis of the referent type is possible and there is no alternation possible between the forms, except for one particular case that is discussed in the conclusion of this paper.
10 In this research, two kinds of statistical support are provided. In principle, the purpose of these tests is to indicate whether the observed distribution of the forms differs significantly from the expected distribution under the null-hypothesis, the arbitrary distribution. The Odds-Ratio (O.R.) is an indication of the deviation of the observed distribution with respect to the expected distribution; an O.R. of 1 indicates that there is no such deviation, and any figure >1 indicates an increasing deviation. The X²-test indicates if the deviation of the observed distribution with respect to the expected one is statistically significant or not. In general, p<0,05 is considered to be significant. We are using these tests, assuming that our data set is a sample of the possible uses of the pronouns of a given language community. We
Table 2 shows that the pronouns do show the expected preferences, as the cells in grey indicate, although dative for *le* in a higher degree (83.3%) than accusative for *lo* (57.3%); in both cases, the differences with the total percentages are close to 20 points (e.g., for *le* this would be 83.3% – 62.6% = 20.7). On the other hand, there are still many cases that do not correspond to the expectations, as the white cells show: 213+80, a total of 293 cases which represent 29.9% of the total (979). So, a vast number of instances in Delibes 1966 may be explained by the traditional case system, but there is an undeniable number of deviant cases, close to one third of the corpus. It can hardly be sustained that the case system represents what speakers do in this particular corpus.

As for the control system, there is hardly a way of measuring independently the degree of control or activity of the corresponding referents. What we have done is classify the referents of the pronouns into human vs. non-human referents, based on the idea that human referents are more likely to be in control, or have a higher natural degree of activity than non-humans. Then, the control system would predict a higher preference of human referents to be represented by *le*, since this pronoun indicates a higher degree of control or activity than *lo*, which correspondingly would be the relatively preferred form by non-human referents. Table 3 shows the result of this prediction.

Table 3: Distribution of *le* and *lo* according to the control system, represented by human vs. non-human referents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>non-human referent</th>
<th>human referent</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>le</em></td>
<td>22/13.9%</td>
<td>591/72.0%</td>
<td>613/62.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lo</em></td>
<td>136/86.1%</td>
<td>230/28.0%</td>
<td>366/37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>158/100%</td>
<td>821/100%</td>
<td>979/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

would like to stress that the statistical tests do not measure any particular causal relation, but are mere observations of the significance of correlations. The associated causality is a hypothesis, created by the analyst and the results of statistical tests can only be taken as supporting it (or not), but never as proof. See also Diver (2012a: 93-95 in particular) for a profound insight in the relation between expected and observed frequencies, and Davis (2002) for an insight in O.R. and general critique on the use of statistics in linguistic research.

The reader should be aware that the percentages should be read vertically, i.e., 83.3% indicates that of all cases classified as dative, 83.3% shows a form of *le*. The comparisons of the percentages are made horizontally, in order to be able to establish the relative preferences for the forms per column. So, the preference for *le* is clearly greater in dative contexts (83.3%) than in accusative contexts (42.7% *lo*). The column on the very right-hand side shows the general proportion of *le* in our corpus (62.6%), so that the reader can check whether the observed deviations under the investigated circumstances is indeed positive or negative. This procedure is used in all tables for the presented results in this study.
Table 3 indeed shows the expected preferences: as the cells in grey indicate, non-human referents show a great preference for \(lo\) (86.1%), which is even more than the preference human referents of for \(le\) (72.0%). Even more striking is the difference of these preferences with the totals: \(lo\) shows a difference of 48.7 points with the average distribution (86.1% - 37.4%); this difference is a lot smaller for \(le\) (9.4 points, 72.0% - 62.6%). On the other hand, also here we see a fair number of cases that do not comply with the expectations, as the white cells show, 22 + 230, a total of 252 cases, representing 25.7% of a total of 979.

A first conclusion that can be made is that both systems are capable of explaining a considerable part of the distribution of the clitics under study. However, a quarter and even a bit more of all examples are not explained, with a little advantage for the control system. Of course, there are doubts about both systems: as we have seen, some verbs, like \(ayudar\) ‘to help’ show variation in the use of the clitics, but for reasons of avoiding circularity, we had to classify all examples one way or the other. On the other hand, we can also not be sure that our measured factor ‘(non-)human referents’ is indeed the perfect representation for the control system, since it is a known fact that human referents are also very frequently observed in dative situations.

In other words, is it possible that tables 2 and 3 show overlap, and have therefore largely measured the same correlations? In order to control this, we have measured the correlation between referent type (human vs. non-human) and case type (dative vs. accusative). The results are shown in tables 4a and b. Firstly, in table 4a the preferences of referent type for case type are rendered:

Table 4a: Case vs. Referent type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>accusative</th>
<th>dative</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>human referent</td>
<td>361/72.3%</td>
<td>460/95.8%</td>
<td>821/83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-human referent</td>
<td>138/27.7%</td>
<td>20/4.2%</td>
<td>158/16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>499/100%</td>
<td>480/100%</td>
<td>979/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4a shows a clear identification of dative situations with human referents: almost 96% of the situations, classified as dative, show a human referent. In table 4b, based on the same basic input, we see an all-different correlation:
Reflections of gender and address in language use: The culturally driven motivation of the uses of Spanish oblique pronouns le and lo

Table 4b: Referent type vs. Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referent Type</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>Dative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human referent</td>
<td>361/44.0%</td>
<td>460/56.0%</td>
<td>821/100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-human referent</td>
<td>138/87.3%</td>
<td>20/12.7%</td>
<td>158/100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>499/51.0%</td>
<td>480/49.0%</td>
<td>979/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all non-human referents, a vast majority occurs in accusative situations: more than 87% of all cases!

There is one crucial aspect in tables 4a and b that explains the identification of non-human referents with accusative case, and the dative case with human referents, namely the fact that there are very few cases, both absolutely and relatively, of non-human referents in dative situations. That there is an identification of non-humans with accusative is all too logical: their natural degree of activity/control is extremely low, which explains both their absolute high occurrence in accusative situations and their mutual meaningful association. The low absolute frequency of non-humans in dative situations at the same time implies an identification of these situations with human referents, in spite of the fact that humans in absolute terms are frequent both in accusative and dative situations. Now this is hardly surprising, since humans can be both active and passive, even though their potential activity is a natural condition of human referents.

Now that we have seen that there is a correlation between case and degree of activity, we now turn to a first qualitative analysis of what the speakers in our corpus actually do. In order to analyze their communicative strategies with respect to the use of the clitics, we have gathered a number of minimal pairs that will be discussed in 3.2.

3.2 First qualitative analysis

In (1a-c) we see a minimal triple in which the referent of the used clitics, in all cases, is the same: Mario, the deceased husband of Carmen. In all three cases, we have an accusative situation, since the clitics represent direct objects with the transitive verb ver ‘to see’. According to the case system, lo should be the expected form; the control system, on the other hand, would predict le for a(n active) human referent. However, in (1a) and (1c), we see use of le, and in (1b) lo:
(1a) p. 7: «Cuando me lo dijeron no podía creerlo. Si le vi ayer». ‘When they told me, I couldn’t believe it. Why, I saw him (le) yesterday.’ [trans p. 4]12

(1b) p. 8: «¿Te importa que pase a verlo?». ‘Do you mind if I go in and look at him (lo)?’ [trans p. 4-5]

(1c) p. 13-14: «En la vida he visto un muerto así se lo asumo. ¡Pero si ni siquiera ha perdido el color!». «¿No quieres pasar a verle, Valen? Te advierto que no impone nada». «De veras que no, bobina. Prefiero guardar un recuerdo de Mario vivo». ‘I’ve never seen a dead man look like him, I promise you. He hasn’t even lost color!’ ‘Don’t you want to go in and see him (le), Valen? I can tell you it’s not the least bit upsetting’. ‘No, really not, silly girl. I’d rather have a memory of Mario alive’. [trans p. 17]

In (1a), one of the visitors of the wake expresses his or her surprise about the unexpected death of Mario, referring to him with le when he was still alive, the day before. In (1b), on the other hand, one of the visitors wants to see the corpse of Mario, who is in another room. In this situation, Mario is dead and therefore cannot be seen as active, so not surprisingly, lo is used. It is obvious that the case system cannot account for this variation, other than claiming that (1a) is considered to be a case of leísmo, which is inherently conflictive with the case system. The control system can explain the variation between (1a) and (1b), since it may explain the difference in control or activity of the referent in these two different situations.

But how about (1c)? Is it to be seen as a counterexample of the control system? Of course, the answer is no. What we see in (1c) is that, although the referent of le, Mario, is dead, but he is looked upon as if he were not dead: he hasn’t lost his color and in fact does not look like a dead person. This explains the use of le: the speaker tries to convince the hearer that the deceased does not look like a dead man at all. The best way of doing so is to refer to him as if he were alive.

In (2), we see varying use of le and lo, referring to Mario being dead, within one speaker. And yet, we may also detect differences in the respective immediate contexts:

(2) p. 10: Era su muerto; ella lo había manufacturado. Le rasuró con la maquinilla eléctrica y le peinó antes de que los muchachos de Carón lo encerraran en el estuche. ‘He was her corpse; she had manufactured him (lo). She shaved him (le) with the electric razor and combed him (le) his hair before the undertaker’s people put him (lo) in the coffin.’ [trans p. 10]

All four cases in (2) are accusative situations. When referring to Mario as a corpse, how she had manufactured him, and when the undertakers put him in the coffin, not surprisingly, lo is used. But in the part where Carmen shaves and combs

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12 All translations from fragments of Cinco Horas con Mario are taken from the only available English translation, done by Frances M. López-Morillas, cf. Delibes 1988. The relevant pages of the translation are indicated by ‘trans p. X’.
Bob de Jonge

Reflections of gender and address in language use: The culturally driven motivation of the uses of Spanish oblique pronouns le and lo

him, there is still some interaction between them, and the fact that his beard grows and his hair becomes unordered may be seen as relatively active from Mario’s side, and therefore le is used to refer to him.

What these examples show is that, where the case system simply cannot account for these cases of variation, the control system can. The difference between the two systems is that the case system does not take the communicative strategy of speakers into account, whereas the control system does. This is because the case system has a fundamentally other theoretical basis: it presupposes grammatical categories in the minds of speakers without room for individual strategies or variation: either a context is categorized as accusative or it is not. The control system, on the other hand, does not work with presupposed categories. The tests shown in tables 3 and 4a-b did not measure the control system directly, but indirectly, by means of a contextual factor that may be taken as an indication of it. The theoretical status of the control system implies that there may be variation within speakers, between speakers and speech communities, since there is no fixed definition of degrees of control or activity, but these may be influenced by contextual circumstances or even cultural ones.

In (3a-b) we see another minimal pair with the same verb, ver ‘to see’, with a human referent in an accusative situation, but this time the referent is not alive vs. dead, but masculine vs. feminine:

(3a) p. 82: ¡Y cómo conduce, Mario!, si da gloria verle, no hace un solo movimiento de más, que parece que ha nacido con el volante entre las manos. ‘And how well he drives, Mario! why, it’s a pleasure to watch him (le), he doesn’t make a single movement more than he needs to, it seems like he was born with the steering wheel in his hands.’ [trans p. 160]

(3b) p. 88: ya ves con Encarna. Si te repugna verla comer y ni la hablas casi ni nada, que no me extraña. ‘just look at you and Encarna. If it repels you to see her (la) eat and you hardly speak to her or anything, which does not surprise me’ [trans p. 173]

In (3a), Carmen expresses her admiration for Paco, an old friend, who drives a futuristic car for those days, a Citroën DS. Obviously, Paco is presented as a highly active participant, with a high degree of control, motive that explains the use of le.

In (3b), on the other hand, we see use of la but also with a human, this time female, referent. The speaker presents her as being active, eating. But the general attitude towards her is negative, and moreover, she has no control over the situation, hence the use of la.

13. The fact that there were also cases in which the grammatical case categories cannot be established is another argument against the case system as a preestablished grammatical system. This does not mean that there cannot be speakers that appear to be acting according to the case system, like speakers of standard Argentinean grosso modo appear to be doing.
In (4a-b) we see a very similar case. In (4a), Carmen is making a comment on Evaristo, another figure in the surroundings of Mario and Carmen, but this time in a dative situation. In (4b), the situation is also dative, but now the human referent is female:

(4a) p. 30-31: Evaristo, le pasó el brazo por los hombros a Transi y que le gustaría hacerle un retrato ‘Evaristo put his arm around Transi and said he (lo)’d like to paint a portrait of her’ [trans p. 51]
(4b) p. 89: ya ves qué sabrá ella de esas cosas, que la gusta meter la nariz en todo ‘look, what does she know about those things, she (la) just likes to stick her nose into everything’ [trans p. 174]

The referent of la in (4b) is Encarna, Mario’s sister-in-law, of whom Carmen suspects that she has an eye on Mario. Again, we see the referent of le, Evaristo, in (4a) being very active, while the referent of la in (4b) is not really inactive, but the speaker is clearly less sympathetic towards her; her attitude is not appreciated and she is presented as ignorant, without control, since she does not know about ‘these things’. Noteworthy is the fact that in the other two uses of le in (4a), le pasó and hacerle, which have Transi as a referent, a positive attitude towards her can be observed, not only by Evaristo, but we know from the context that Transi is valued by Carmen, whereas Encarna is not. But as we will see in 4.3, female human referents are being presented systematically using the pronoun la.

3.3 Second quantitative analysis

That (3a-b) and (4a-b) are not carefully chosen, exotic examples, but instead indications of a more generalized pattern, is shown in table 5, where the distribution of the pronouns over the gender of the referents is shown. The expectation is that masculine referents show a clear preference for le and feminine ones for la.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>le</th>
<th>la</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>le</td>
<td>535/80.8%</td>
<td>71/22.9%</td>
<td>606/62.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la</td>
<td>127/19.2%</td>
<td>239/77.1%</td>
<td>366/37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>662/100%</td>
<td>310/100%</td>
<td>972/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 Totals of le is lower than in the previous tables, because in 7 cases, the gender of the referent could not be established. Therefore, these cases could not be taken into consideration for this table.
Reflections of gender and address in language use: The culturally driven motivation of the uses of Spanish oblique pronouns *le* and *lo*

Table 5 indeed shows the expected preferences: as the cells in grey show, feminine referents show a great preference for *lo* (i.e., *la*) (77.1%), which is quite similar to the preference of masculine referents for *le* (80.8%). Even more striking is the difference of these preferences with the totals: *lo* shows a difference of more than 39 points with the average distribution (77.1% - 37.7%), which is higher than *le* (18.5 points, 80.8% - 62.3%). On the other hand, also here we see a fair number of cases that do not comply with the expectations, as the white cells show, 127 + 71, a total of 198 cases, representing 20.4% of a total of 972.

Table 5 clearly shows that there is a correlation between *le* and masculine referents on the one hand, and between *lo* (i.e., *la*), and feminine referents. This means that the conclusions with respect to use of *le* and a relatively high degree of activity seems to be relevant for masculine referents, and not for feminine ones.\(^\text{15}\) Obviously, the question is why this is so. And surprisingly, the overall results of table 5 overclass the results of tables 2 and 3 in the sense that the results of table 2 had an exception rate of almost 30%, table 3 a little bit over 25% and table 5 around 20%. So, it seems that gender has greater explanatory force than case or control for the observed distribution of the pronouns.

On a superficial level, table 5 appears to show what is descriptively known as *leismo* and *laismo*: use of *le* for male human referents in accusative situations, and use of *la* for female human referents in dative situations. But since these observations merely describe the facts in the light of traditional grammatical categories, and fail to give an explanation for them, our aim is to provide an explanation here.

In principle, there are two known hypotheses that provide an explanation for these observations. In the first place, as observed by De Jonge and Di Lollo (2000: 43), feminine grammatical gender has greater deictic force than masculine gender, which means that the speaker/hearer can indicate/identify a potential referent with more precision using *la* than using *lo* or *le* with the same degree of effort. Therefore, *la* has a communicative advantage over both *lo* and *le*. This advantage is even bigger in comparison to *le*, since *le* is not conveying any information concerning gender. In other words, *la* brings about a certain advantage over *le* whenever a female referent is in play. Moreover, as argued by Fernández-Ordóñez (1999: 1319), use of *le* creates a parallel with the demonstrative paradigm, since the masculine single terms *este* ‘this’ and *ese* ‘that’ also end in *-e*. This may also be taken as an argument to explain the observed distribution in table 5. This hypothesis will therefore be referred to as the *grammatical markedness hypothesis*.

Another possible explanation for the observed distribution could be the one presented in García (1975), as mentioned earlier, who claims that *leismo* is not arbitrary: it is [emphasis EG] true that males are inherently more active than females,

\(^{15}\) We use the terms masculine and feminine here, because this table does not distinguish between human and non-human referents. As will be shown below, this distinction plays a crucial role.
and it cannot be questioned, moreover, that within Spanish culture (if not universally), males are socially more highly valued than females’ (1975: 330), reason why males get *le* in accusative situations. In García (2009), this is rephrased in more general terms, stating that ‘the DAT case […] is preferred for socially more highly valued human O[bject]’s’ (2009: 60). This implies that ‘human O’s’ that systematically show a preference for ACC case, like females, are socially less highly valued. In other words, the skewing of *le* vs. *la* over masculine vs. feminine referents should be taken as an exploitation of the Control hypothesis, which explains the standard distribution of the pronouns over Dative and Accusative situations. This particular hypothesis will be referred to as the *sociocultural markedness hypothesis*.

In principle, both hypotheses are capable of explaining a large part of the distribution observed in table 5. In order to compare the explanatory force of each of them, we need to execute another, more detailed analysis. In order to do so, we will proceed to make a distinction between two types of referents: human and non-human. The grammatical hypothesis does not make a distinction between the two referent types, since it only refers to the grammatical gender of any referent. The sociocultural hypothesis, on the other hand, only has relevance for human referents.

As a first test, the distribution of the pronouns over human referents is shown. If male human referents show a preference for *le* and the female human referents for *la*, in principle both hypotheses may provide an explanation for this non-arbitrary distribution, and this is what we expect to see. In table 6a, the results are shown. As we will show further below, for non-human referents, this might not be the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>human male</th>
<th>human female</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>le</em></td>
<td>520/92.7%</td>
<td>65/25.6%</td>
<td>585/71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lo/la</em></td>
<td>41/7.3%</td>
<td>189/74.4%</td>
<td>230/28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>561/100%</td>
<td>254/100%</td>
<td>815/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected, these results confirm our prediction, as the grey cells indicate: almost 93% of all human male referents are referred to by *le*, and almost 75% of all human female referents are referred to by *la*. But we do not know if the observed preference of female human referents for *la* may be explained by the supposed low degree of control or activity by women in a machista culture, or if it is the result of feminine grammatical markedness. Therefore, we have executed a similar test, but now for non-human referents of the pronouns.

In theory, two results can be expected: a pattern similar to the observations of table 6a, or an arbitrary distribution. If the observed pattern is similar to table 6a, then the same principle should be invoked to explain both 6a and b, and since the
sociocultural hypothesis basically predicts a distribution for human referents only, the default candidate is the grammatical markedness hypothesis. On the other hand, if no preference is observed, the grammatical markedness hypothesis fails and since the sociocultural hypothesis does not make predictions for non-human referents, it is not rejected, which makes the hypothesis compatible with both tables. The results are presented in table 6b:

Table 6b: Gender of non-human referents vs. le and lo/la

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>non-human masculine</th>
<th>non-human feminine</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le</td>
<td>15/14,9%</td>
<td>6/10,7%</td>
<td>21/13,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lo/la</td>
<td>86/85,1%</td>
<td>50/89,3%</td>
<td>136/86,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>101/100%</td>
<td>56/100%</td>
<td>157/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that both masculine and feminine non-human referents have a clear preference for lo/la (85,1% and 89,3%, respectively) and that these percentages do not differ significantly from one another (p<0,5). These results seem to indicate that both referent types are treated in a very similar way, and therefore the winner of the hypotheses seems to be the sociocultural one, as argued above, since it is the only candidate that can justify the distributions of both table 6a and 6b.

As a final quantitative control, we should check if there is a different distribution of the pronouns over human female vs. non-human feminine referents. Here, the grammaticality hypothesis predicts a non-significant, arbitrary distribution. Also, the sociocultural hypothesis would still stand, but such a result would indicate an absolute equalness between human and non-human feminine referents, reducing females to things. But if human females show only a slight preference for le, the interpretation could be that, although they are seen as relatively inactive with respect to human males, they are not inactive altogether, since they obviously are more active than non-human feminine referents. The results are shown in table 6c:

Table 6c: Feminine gender and female sex vs. le and la

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>non-human feminine</th>
<th>human female</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le</td>
<td>6/10,7%</td>
<td>65/25,6%</td>
<td>71/22,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la</td>
<td>80/89,3%</td>
<td>189/74,4%</td>
<td>239/77,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56/100%</td>
<td>254/100%</td>
<td>310/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of table 6c, based on data from tables 6a and b, show that human female referents have a relative preference for le (25,6% vs. 10,7% le for non-human feminine referents). From this result it can be taken that, in spite of their perceived
inactiveness in general terms in comparison with men, real life women are considered to be more active than feminine objects. This difference cannot be attributed to the markedness of feminine grammatical gender, but must instead be the result of the general meaning of le, as proposed by Columbia School scholars, i.e., a higher degree of control/activity of its referent with respect to those referred to by lo/la.

3.4 Second qualitative analysis

The final question is how these tendencies may be observed in the individual practice of communicative situations of speakers. In (5a-b) we can observe glimpses of the general attitude towards male and female human referents in our corpus. In (5a), Carmen speaks of her father-in-law, someone who supposedly traded in the black market during the Spanish civil war. In (5b), on the other hand, Carmen speaks about her mother, but very respectful:

(5a) p. 30: Y a mí no me pareció mala persona tu padre cuando le conocí, te lo juro, que, sinceramente, iba dispuesta a lo peor y luego un infeliz, un poco chiflado. ‘And your father didn’t seem to be a bad person when I met him (le), I swear, to be frank with you I expected the worst and then he was just an unhappy man, a little unbalanced maybe’ [trans p. 49]

(5b) p. 32: Mamá era una verdadera señora, Mario, tú la conociste y, antes, ¡para qué te voy a decir!, que me gustaría que la hubieras visto recibir antes de la guerra, qué fiestas, qué trajes, un empaque que no veas cosa igual. ‘Mama was a real lady, Mario, you knew her (la), and before, what’s the use of telling you! I wish you’d seen her receiving calls before the war, what parties, what clothes, a presence like nothing you’ve ever seen’ [trans p. 55]

In spite of the negative connotations in (5a) and the positive ones in (5b), the use of the pronouns seems to reflect the prototypical image of gender differences: a high level of activity or control in the case of the father-in-law, who, in spite of everything, did something to keep himself and his family alive, reason to refer to him using le; the mother has a representative role, exhibiting her looks and not very much more, and therefore is referred to by la.

In (6a-b) we see another reflection of the different degree of control between men and women. (6a) deals with the relation between men and violence, and (6b) about the supposed intellectual inferiority of a woman:

(6a) p. 27: Ahora no le hables a un muchacho de la guerra, Mario, y ya sé que la guerra es horrible, cariño, pero al fin y al cabo es oficio de valientes, que de los españoles dirán que hemos sido guerreros, pero no nos ha ido tan mal me parece a mi ‘Don’t talk [him (le)] to a boy about the war nowadays, Mario, and of course I know war is horrible, sweetheart, but after all it’s the business of the brave, people
can say of us Spaniards that we’ve always been warlike, but we haven’t done so badly it seems to me’ [trans p. 46]

(6b) p. 88: Si te repugna verla comer y ni la hablas casi ni nada, que no me extraña, porque tu cuñada activa será lo que quieras pero de conversación, cero ‘If it repels you to see her eat and you hardly speak to her (la) or anything, which does not surprise me, because your sister-in-law may be as active as you please but as for conversation zero’ [trans p. 173]

In (6a), men are obviously related to war, and therefore are seen as brave, active and in control, hence use of *le*. In (6b), the supposed activity ‘as you please’ is not in the realm of good manners or conversation skills, resulting in a reference by means of *la*.

In (7a-b) a minimal pair is shown in which the degree of control is clearly different with two female referents. In (7a), the referent of *le* is *poitrine*, a French loanword indicating Carmen’s bosom, that clearly sorts effect on all men, exhibiting a high degree of control over them, albeit on a traditional, sexual way. (7b), on the contrary, explains the lack of sexual attraction of Charo, Carmen’s sister-in-law, reason why she is being referred to with *la*, representing her as a passive creature, in spite of the dative situation in which she is presented:

(7a) p. 95: lo que él miraba era mi poitrine, que no le quitaba ojo, que aquí, para inter nos, Mario, yo no sé qué tendrán mis pechos pero no hay hombre que se resista ‘what he was looking at was my bosom, he never took his eyes off it (le), and here between us, Mario, I don’t know what it is about my breasts, but there isn’t a man who can resist them’ [trans p. 189]

(7b) p. 31: que a Charo la pones derecha, con un sujetador como Dios manda y la quitas unos filetes de las pantorrillas ‘because if you make Charo stand up straight, and put a decent bra on her and take [her (la)] a few layers off her calves’ [trans p. 53]

(7a) obviously is a case where her female activity is centered on her sexuality, as the most active part of her being, resulting in the use of *le*, zoomed in on her breasts; in (7b), on the other hand, the absence of sexual attraction is stressed with the use of *la* for Charo as a whole.

There is an important (small) group of examples that could not always be taken into account for tables 5 and 6a-c, namely those with referent *gente* ‘people’. Grammatically spoken, *gente* is feminine, but the sex of the actual referents is indeterminate in many occasions, reason why some cases could not be classified for table 5.16 But the individual cases show some interesting variation. In (8a-c), the actual referents are indefinite, just general people (8a and 8b) or ‘the right kind of

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16 This explains the discrepancies between the totals of table 4 on the one hand (979), and those of tables 5 (972), and 6a-c, on the other.
people’ (8c); in (8d) and (8e) they are clearly identified with contextually present male referents, streetworkers in (8d) and the university beadle in (8e). All examples are in dative situations and not surprisingly, exhibit use of le:

(8a) p. 22 A la gente le importan un comino las tesis y los impactos, créeme ‘People [to them (le)] don’t give a damn about theses and impacts, believe me’ [trans p. 35]
(8b) p. 48 Y eso a la gente, no, Mario, que la gente es muy avisada y no le gusta que le vayan con problemas, que bastantes tienen ya, que me he hartado de decírtelo. ‘And people don’t like that, no, Mario, people are very smart and they (le) don’t like to be presented with problems, they have enough of those already, I’m sick and tired of telling you so.’ [trans p. 88]
(8c) p. 91 Y si los paletos no saben leer, Mario, y a la gente bien le traen sin cuidado los paletos ‘And if yokes don’t know how to read, Mario, and the right kind of people don’t give [to them (le)] a hang about yokels’ [trans p. 179]
(8d) p. 95 mira el otro día, sin ir más lejos, un patán que estaba abriendo una zanja en la calle la Victoria, pero a voces, «¡guapa, con esa delantera, ni Ricardo Zamora!». Si, ya lo sé, una grosería, desde luego, pero qué le vas a pedir a esa gente y, francamente, por eso me duele más lo tuyo ‘why just the other day, to give you only one example, there was a lout who was digging a ditch on the Calle de la Victoria, but really yelling, “Honey, with a front line like that the goalie wouldn’t have a chance!” Yes, I know, it’s coarse, naturally, but what can you expect [them (le)] from people like that, and frankly, that’s why your attitude hurts me even more’ [trans p. 189]
(8e) p. 104 Estoy cansada de decírtelo, Mario, que a esta gente le das confianzas y no sabe hasta dónde puede llegar ‘I am tired of telling you, Mario, that if you get chummy with these people ([le]) you don’t know where it will end’ [these people = university beadle] [trans p. 205]

These examples clearly support the idea, brought about by tables 6a-c, that the grammatical gender is NOT the determinative factor in the use of le vs. la in case of gendered referents.

4 Discussion

The examples, shown in (5)-(8), are not to be seen as carefully selected examples because of their explanatory force, but as representative of general patterns, observed in tables 6a-c. These examples support the explanation, given for the observed distributions of the tables, i.e., the sociocultural markedness hypothesis predicting the use of dative la for female human referents, which explains the observed differences better than the grammatical markedness hypothesis, which would predict the use of dative la for all feminine referents. It is noteworthy, however, that both hypotheses are not equally in line with the general CS hypothesis of the system of control with respect to the use of the personal pronouns in general;
the sociocultural markedness hypothesis fully exploits the semantic substance of the system of control, whereas the grammatical markedness one invokes another strategy for the choice of *la*, namely an easier identification of the referent through its grammatical (feminine) gender.

Examples (9a-b) show another interesting minimal pair in which the sociocultural aspects of Spanish society under Franco perfectly match the use of the pronouns. In (9a), Carmen describes the standard situation of a woman in Spanish society, through the future perspective of Menchu, their daughter, claiming that being a woman (subordinate, hence *la*, in spite of the dative situation) will be her role in life. In (9b), on the other hand, the referent of *le* is ‘order’, inanimate and used in an accusative situation. But ‘order’ is representing the high degree of control that the (Franco) authority has over society, and therefore this pronoun is at its place here:

(9a) p. 61 que Menchu, estudie o no, por lo menos, es dócil, y mal que bien aprobará la reválida de cuarto, tenlo por seguro, y ya está bien, que una chica no debe saber más, Mario, hay que darla tiempo de ser mujer que a fin de cuentas es lo suyo. ‘and Menchu, whether she studies or not, at least she is easy to manage, and she’ll pass the exam for the lower-level certificate somehow or other, you can be sure of it, and that’s enough, a girl ought not to know any more, Mario, she has to be given [to her (*la*)] time to be a woman, when all’s said and done that’s her role in life.’ [trans p. 113]

(9b) p. 61 No te rías, Mario, pero una autoridad fuerte es la garantía del orden, acuerdate de la República, no es que yo me lo invente, aquí y en todas partes, y el orden hay que mantenerle por las buenas o por las malas. ‘Don’t laugh, Mario, but a strong authority is a guarantee of order, just remember the Republic, and it’s not that I’m inventing it, here in Spain and everywhere, and order [it (*le*)] has to be maintained, by fair means or foul.’ [trans p. 114]

Another challenging minimal pair is offered in (10a-b). In this part of the novel, the narrator is omnipotent, and not Carmen in her interior monologue, which is characteristic for the major part of the novel. But, also in this part, variation between the use of *le* and *la* is observed. In (10a), Carmen is exhausted of the visits, and one of her closest friends, Valentina, is trying to convince her that she needs to rest. Carmen puts no resistance and obeys, and is guided by Valentina into bed. Valentina is clearly in control, and therefore, use of *la* in reference to Carmen is explicable.

(10b), on the other hand, shows a slightly different situation, albeit very similar. Valentina has to insist much more; Carmen is worried about the book that is lying beside her, a bible Mario used to read in spite of his criticism towards the church. Valentina has to insist more, because Carmen is less passive than in (10a), and therefore, *le* appears to more at its place:
Carmen se sienta en el borde de la gran cama y se descalza dócilmente, empujando el zapato del pie derecho con la punta del pie izquierdo y a la inversa. Valentina la ayuda a tenderse y, luego, dobla un triángulo de colcha de manera que la cubra medio cuerpo, de la cintura a los pies.
"‘You have to sleep a little while, Menchu. I’m delighted to see you being so brave and all, but make no mistake, you foolish girl, this is absolutely artificial. It always happens. Your nerves don’t let you rest. You’ll see tomorrow.’"
Carmen sits on the edge of the big bed and obediently takes off her shoes, pushing the right shoe off with the tip of her left foot and vice versa. Valentina helps her (la) to lie down and then folds back a triangle of bedspread to make it cover (her (la)) half her body, from the waist down. [trans p. 3]

(10b) p. 13: —¿Está ahí el libro, Valen?
—¡Chist! Aquí está. No te preocupes, bobina. Ahora relájate, anda, te lo pido por lo que más quieras. Nadie te lo va a quitar.
Valentina se incorpora, le pone una mano en la nuca y le ayuda a tenderse de nuevo; luego, le cubre con la colcha blanca suavemente.
"‘Is the book there, Valen?’"
"Ssh! Here it is. Don’t worry, silly girl. Just relax now, come on, I’m asking you pretty-please. Nobody’s going to take it away from you.’"
Valentina stands up, puts [her (le)] a hand under Carmen’s neck and helps her (le) to lay down again; then she gently covers her (le) with the white bedspread. [trans p. 15]

But there is one case where gente is also used in a dative situation, but nevertheless unexpectedly shows use of la (11):

(11) p. 88. Porque aun admitiendo que Fito Solórzano no te invitara a sentarte, que lo dudo, o que se pusiera a fumar sin ofrecerle, ¿qué importancia tiene eso? Él venía dispuesto a hacer las paces, eso está claro, que no sé a cuento de qué te pusiste así al ver tu nombre en los pasquines, que a mí, ni me atrevía a decírtelo, me hizo hasta ilusión, lo reconozco, así, de sopetón, con letras tan grandonas. ¡Alabado sea Dios!, Mario, que el propio Vicente lo dijo, «en la vida he visto a Mario tan alterado, estaba como si le hubieran prendido un par de banderillas», que no es para tanto, vamos, y duro «que contaran antes conmigo», pero alma de Dios, ¿es que también va a haber que contar con la gente para hacerla un favor? ‘Because even admitting that Fito Solórzano didn’t invite you to sit down, or started to smoke without offering you one, what importance does that have? He was ready to make peace with you, that’s obvious, and I don’t know why in heaven’s name you acted like that when you saw your name written up on the walls, because, I didn’t dare to tell you, I was kind of excited about it, I admit it, to see it all at once like that, in such big letters. Praise be to God! Mario, even Vicente said it, “I’ve never seen Mario so worked up, it’s as if they’d stuck a couple of darts into him,” it wasn’t such a big deal, goodness, and so stubborn “They should have asked for my consent in advance”, but for heaven’s sake,
are they going to have to consult with people to do them (la) a favor?" [trans p. 171-172]

This case is not only surprising because of its use of la in a dative situation; it is even more so because the implicit referent of gente is Mario!

However, the described situation in (11) is fundamentally different. This use of gente does not imply the people that surround Carmen and Mario, but implicitly refers to Mario himself. In Carmen’s view, Mario is looked down upon by his circle, and the use of gente underscores this; use of low control la in a dative situation is another blow to his face because of the lack of control in this situation, at least, in Carmen’s opinion.

5 Conclusion

This paper has tried to demonstrate that dative and accusative are by no means preconceived categories in the minds of speakers, let alone that they can motivate the choice between the forms le and lo, at least in the group of speakers represented in Cinco horas con Mario. The communicative strategy that underlies these choices can be explained using the control system hypothesis presented by García (1975) and García & Otheguy (1983), among others, whereas the case system hypothesis is only a descriptive device. The advantage of the control system theory is that it is not only capable of explaining the distributions of the pronouns in communities that appear to correspond to the case system, which descends from Latin, but also other phenomena, like leísmo and laísmo, that are considered to be – largely unexplained – deviations of the case system and of which some are descriptively accepted under certain circumstances (leísmo with male human referents) while other uses are condemned (laísmo, loísmo). The control system is not only capable of providing explanations for these so-called deviations, but can also explain other distributions, such as the ones described in García and Otheguy (1983), because it does not consider the Spanish pronoun system as autonomous, but as a flexible product of human communication, taking cultural circumstances into account. The corpus that this paper has studied, a certain variety of Spanish, represented by one particular author in a very specific period of time and space, has brought about certain peculiarities that mirror very specific cultural characteristics of the portrayed society that the control system provides an explanation for.

So, the main conclusion is not that our data necessarily have shown that Spanish society is a fundamentally machista society, but that the image Delibes wants to show the reader is that of a very traditional Spanish middle-class bourgeois society of the 60s, in which the roles of the sexes is clearly cut up into two sections of society. In (12a-b) we see another interesting minimal pair in which Delibes not only
gives a very traditional vision on Spanish society, but also provides the only case of loiismo, i.e., use of lo where le would be the expected form. The construction in which the variation is observed is darle vueltas, lit. ‘to give it turns’, ‘to discuss’, which in theory does not allow use of lo:\textsuperscript{17}

(12a) p. 35: ¿para qué va a estudiar una mujer, Mario, si puede saberse? ¿Qué saca en limpio con ello, dime? Hacerse un marimacho, ni más ni menos, que una chica universitaria es una chica sin femineidad, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, que para mí una chica que estudia es una chica sin sexy, no le des más vueltas, that’s the size of it, a girl who goes to university is a girl who isn’t feminine, no two ways about it (le), for me a girl who studies isn’t one bit sexy, it’s not her thing, come on, admit it.’

(12b) p. 92: Tú te lo guisas y tú te lo comes, Mario, no lo demos más vueltas, que al demonio se le ocurre decir una cosa así. ¿Tú crees que un cristiano puede decir a boca llena, en plena clase, que era una lástima que la Iglesia no apoyase la Revolución Francesa? ‘You make your bed and then you have to lie on it, Mario, let’s not discuss it (lo) any further, the devil himself wouldn’t have thought of saying a thing like that. Do you think that a Christian can say right out, in the middle of class, that it was a shame that the Church didn’t support the French Revolution?’

(12a) provides the reader of a canonic use of le, in which the not very emancipated vision of Carmen is being depicted, typical of the traditional Franquista part of society. In (12b), on the other hand, Carmen criticizes her dead husband’s attitude towards the Catholic Church, that is contrary to the standard opinion, especially in the reported period in Spanish history. It is precisely in this situation where Carmen uses the only non-canonic loiista form in the book, underlining her derogatory view on Mario’s attitude.

Another question is if this particular corpus may be taken as representative for the communicative strategies of the speakers of this particular part of society that is presented here. There are various literary studies of Delibes’ work that support this idea. For example, Larraz (2009) states that

El magistral estudio lingüístico desplegado en el soliloquio de Carmen se correspondía fielmente con el habla cotidiana y los clichés más recurrentes de la pequeña burguesía española, [...]. ‘The magnificent linguistic study exposed in Carmen’s soliloquy corresponded perfectly to the every-day’s speech and most common clichés of the small Spanish bourgeoisie, [...].’ [translation mine, BdJ]

\textsuperscript{17} Since the pronouns in both examples do not have identifiable referents, they were not included in the quantitative analysis of this study. Moreover, this is a unique minimal pair, and can therefore not be taken as illustrative of a general pattern, but of a particular instance of use, reason why it is only dealt with in this qualitative manner.
So, at the least, this corpus represents the communicative strategies as observed by one connoisseur of this particular variant of Spanish, but in view of the fact that, according to the literature on his work, his use of Spanish is indeed representative of a certain community of speakers, we may also safely conclude that the results of our study may be taken as support for the control hypothesis.

An important, if not the most important, aspect of this theory is that it does not predict how the pronouns should be used in any occasion under any circumstance, but precisely that, since it takes human behavior into account, the actual output of the system may vary according to the (cultural) circumstances of particular (communities of) speakers. If we compare the basic meaning of a linguistic form with the basic function of a screwdriver, we see the following: a screwdriver is designed to screw and unscrew, but it is also very useful to open paint cans (Reid 1991: 93–94). In much the same way, speakers can freely use linguistic forms in a creative, unpredictable manner, in relation to their ‘original’ meanings.

But there is a fundamental difference between the screwdriver and the linguistic form: there is a causal relation between the form of the screwdriver and its function. The original design of a screwdriver is not arbitrary, on the contrary: its form needs to fit exactly the shape of the type of screws it has to (un)screw. In other words, the form of the screwdriver determines its basic function. The linguistic form, on the other hand, is arbitrary, and even more so when grammatical forms are concerned. In this case, there is no such thing as a basic meaning that determines its form. Therefore, this allows for the forms le and lo to be implemented in different situations without discrimination of which one is more “natural” for its basic meaning. And therefore, they function equally well in variants that show a distribution that resembles the system of Latin, like Argentinian Spanish (García, 1975), as in other variants of Latin American Spanish, like Equatorian (García and Otheguy 1983) and other situations of contact with indigenous languages (Martínez 2000), or even in the variant of Spanish presented in this study.

In conclusion, one can say that careful observation of the non-arbitrary distribution of linguistic forms allows us to formulate hypotheses concerning their basic meanings. If the analysis is successful, this will allow us to track down independently not only the meanings of the forms, but also find evidence for certain literary or cultural phenomena, by following the communicative strategies of language users. The only thing a linguist needs to do is find the forms and carefully observe their distributions.
References


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Bob de Jonge (1958) is Associate Professor in Spanish linguistics at the University of Groningen. He wrote his PhD dissertation on uses of ser and estar in age expressions in Mexico and Venezuela in 1990 at the University of Leiden. He has published on various topics, mainly on Spanish linguistics, always from a highly functionalist perspective.

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