



## COURTESY IN THE PHENOMENON OF OMISSION OF YO: ANALYSIS OF THE FILM UNTIL WE FIND OURSELVES AGAIN



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### ABSTRACT

To deepen the understanding of the use of yo, this study aims to observe the courtesy strategies applied in cases of omission of the deixis represented by the first-person singular pronoun in Spanish, from a sociopragmatic perspective. We adopted a qualitative methodological approach and, as for the objectives, a descriptive analysis. Thus, we describe the data based on the investigations of authors such as Briz (2005), Bravo (2002), Haverkate (1994), Escandell Vidal (1996) and Gomes (2013). Regarding the studies of courtesy and its main concepts, we turn to González (1994), Cantero (1976) and Serrano (2014), specifically in the pragmatic studies on the omission of the pronoun. Considering the research procedure, according to the studies of Bauer, Gaskell and Allum (2002), this study is classified as a sample survey, since the analysis is carried out through the description of the characteristics and linguistic profile of a given community. From the studies and the analysis of the results, we found that the image manifestations that influence the omission for reasons of courtesy include the preservation of autonomy, the protection of faces and attenuation.

**Keywords:** Attenuation, Courtesy, Omission, Yo.

## INTRODUCTION

In the course of life in society, in many of our interactions, we use a crucial element studied by pragmatics: courtesy. In many cases, this strategy serves to facilitate social interaction by building an environment of respect. However, with the differences between peoples, it is common for the manifestations of courtesy to also differ. To affirm, Charaudeau (2008) argues that the process of speech production comes from the experiences lived by each one, and, on the other hand, interpretation comes from the knowledge shared in a given linguistic community.

These issues of variations that occur because of the divergences of the manifestations of courtesy happen because of the uniqueness of each speaker and each community. It is through linguistic uses that the speaker reveals his identity as an individual and as a participant in the community. This manifestation happens when the enunciator endows his statements with intentionalities in order to protect his image and that of the other to maintain the harmony of the relationship.

Still in this line, the speaker also reveals his identity in the phenomenon of the omission of the first person singular pronoun. Based on this idea, we chose to analyze the film genre to study the omission of the deixis of person *yo*, considering that this type of text often uses a more fluid or relaxed language. Labov (2008), a renowned scholar of linguistic variation, points out that this criterion is essential for an effective analysis.

That said, we will seek to answer the following question: Which manifestations of social image are most characteristic of the Spanish protagonist of the film *Hasta that we find again*? In view of the above, the general objective of the research is to identify the manifestations of courtesy through the omission of *the yo of the protagonist of the film Hasta that we find again*, in Portuguese, "Until next time". Consequently, the research was directed to three specific objectives: a) To select the statements where the deictic *yo* is omitted; b) To observe how courtesy influences the phenomenon of omission; c) Identify the facial characteristics that most collaborate with the phenomenon.

The *corpus* of this investigation is composed of the statements of the feature film *Hasta that we will find again*. In the act of selecting, we randomly chose some lines of the main character, Salvador, who is Spanish, in which there is an omission of the first person singular pronoun.

Our methodology is qualitative, as it aims to analyze the strategies used to safeguard the social image in cases where the first person singular pronoun is mentioned. In addition, it is defined as descriptive, since it classifies and describes the data based on previous studies on the subject. According to the studies of Bauer, Gaskell and Allum (2002), the

research is categorized as a sample survey, as it involves the description of the traits and linguistic profile of the peninsular community analyzed.

With regard to the theoretical framework, we based ourselves on the teachings of Haverkate (1994), Escandell Vidal (1996), Bravo (2002), Gomes (2013), Briz (2005) and Cantero (1976).

Finally, the research is divided, in addition to these initial considerations, into three theoretical sections that address the facets of courtesy, social image and omission of yo; then, we present the methodology and analysis of the data regarding the courtesy strategies used in the act of omission; to close, we present the final considerations.

## **THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF COURTESY**

Communication is a fundamental process in human life, essential for building and maintaining relationships, carrying out tasks, and transmitting knowledge. The effectiveness of communication depends on several factors, including clarity of the message, context, communicative skills of the interlocutors, and the ability to listen and correctly interpret what is being conveyed. Different cultures and social contexts also influence the way we communicate, setting norms and expectations that shape our interactions.

To facilitate these interactions, we use a crucial component studied by pragmatics called courtesy or politeness. Escandell Vidal (1996) says that courtesy is nothing more than a strategy to maintain harmonious relationships. The importance of courtesy transcends cultural and social boundaries, and is universally recognized as a value that promotes peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

In this investigation, we used the term courtesy, since the research seeks to analyze the courtesy in the utterances of a film uttered by a Spaniard and in Spanish. However, this term in Brazil is known as politeness. Based on this, we treat the terms as synonyms and, consequently, without distinctions.

In professional contexts, courtesy can strengthen work relationships, improve communication and progress of work activities. In everyday interactions, politeness helps to avoid conflicts, reduce misunderstandings, and create a more pleasant living environment.

This requires sensitivity to individual and cultural differences, as well as the ability to tailor communication according to the specific context. For example, what is considered courteous in one culture may not be in another, this highlights the importance of intercultural competence in the application of courtesy. Haverkate (1994) reaffirms the idea of cultural divergences when he says that although courtesy suggests a standard form of behavior among peoples, it is unquestionable that there are distinct norms in each specific

culture. In short, courtesy is universal, although its characteristic manifestations may vary from one culture to another.

Additionally, strategic courtesy can be used to achieve specific goals, such as negotiating effectively, resolving conflicts, or generally building a positive personal image. With this, we understand that courtesy is related to the construction of individual identity and of the group to which we belong (Haverkate, 1994). The aforementioned author, Haverkate, still supports the idea that we are committed to an image and that in no way does it present itself as neutral, its locutions are either courteous or not, because there is no average behavior.

That said, understanding and respecting cultural differences is crucial for satisfying intercultural communication and building positive relationships in global contexts. Based on this, in the next section, we discuss the social image and present the concepts of positive and negative social image and their facets.

## **SOCIAL IMAGE: ASPECTS OF THE SPANISH SOCIAL IMAGE**

Taking into account the manifestation of identity, Bravo (2002) explains the universal need that every speaker has to defend their face or social image so as not to have some unwanted effect, so they strive for the behavior to be accepted by society. Gomes (2013) conceptualizes the face as the self-image constructed by the individual through his conduct. This image is approved by the society in which it is inserted.

Based on pragmalinguistics, classic authors such as Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1978) established in their studies, on the theory of courtesy, two aspects that encompass the social image: positive and negative. It is through these two forms that we present our face to others.

Succinctly, Lopes (2018) mentions some strategies of positive social image. The aforementioned author says that speakers use the positive face when they want to be supportive, as they manifest a willingness to pay attention. In this way, they strengthen the bonds of the relationship, also in words of agreement, nicknames, use of it, slang and compliments. These are some examples of those who seek to be integrated and accepted both by others and by the social environment.

On the other hand, the negative side corresponds to the need to be independent and have freedom in one's actions. It is manifested in attitudes in which it attenuates itself to preserve the image of the other and avoid invasions in one's own territory. It is possible to identify them through the depersonalization and relativization of what is said, for example (Lopes, 2018).

Unlike pragmalinguistic studies, Bravo (2002), a researcher of sociocultural pragmatics, baptizes these terms with the following nomenclatures: Alter and Ego. This was precisely due to the diversity of peoples, that is, what is positive in one culture may not be in another. In this way, the Alter corresponds to the affiliation that makes the speaker identify with the group. On the other hand, the Ego concerns the need for autonomy. From now on, we will adopt these terms.

In view of these concepts briefly addressed so far, we will describe some characteristic points of the Castilian community based on the studies of Bravo (2002), although it does not specify a community and addresses it in a general way. First, it is valid to justify some choices.

Speech community is presented by Valcárcel and Salvador (2008) as a group of speakers who share the same norms of a language and sociolinguistic elements.

Within this perspective, Moreno Fernández (2007) organizes the communities of Spanish speakers through geographic regions. With this in mind, the community that encompasses the region of Spain is classified as a Castilian area, so we will also keep the terms.

Bravo (2002) points out that it is convenient for Spain to demonstrate its own qualities, that is, to show what is good is a sign of autonomy. Thus, it is understood that if the individual does not have a clear vision of himself, it is because he feels compromised, causing discouragement in interpersonal relationships (Bravo, 2002).

On the other hand, the controversy is that this autonomy can show pride, because the ego needs to speak louder, because these qualities are usually reaffirmed (Bravo, 2002). In addition, the author also points out that this notion of pride denotes defensive behavior, since statements of this type are generally used to defend the environment to which the individual belongs.

Bravo (2002) says that, with the autonomy present in Spanish culture, it is possible to notice a good dose of tolerance for expressions of opinions and positions. According to the same author, this characteristic reestablishes trust among speakers, as they eliminate the fear of expressing oneself. At the same time that there is a conflict of thoughts, there is a productive communicative exchange.

Finally, Spaniards usually manifest their image using autonomy to emphasize their original identity without fear of hurting and having their freedom hurt. In the traditional perspective presented by Brown and Levinson (1978), this autonomy is part of the negative side, but we can see that within the Spanish context it is a characteristic well regarded and valued by people. Briz (2007) completes this idea by saying that cultures are determining

factors and that some tend to move away or closer to each other to a greater or lesser degree, such as the Spanish culture, which tends to move away.

Having presented these aspects, to mitigate conflicts that may appear in communication, we minimize the ego by using an element of courtesy known as attenuation. We will briefly discuss it in the next section.

### **MITIGATION: ENABLING CONTEXTS**

As already seen, successful communication is endowed with courtesy. In addition, to mitigate threats to the face, we use mitigation as a strategy to maintain respect and cooperation among speakers. Gomes (2013, p. 15) says that attenuation serves "to minimize, in advance, harmful effects of certain speech acts and is used to attenuate the propositional content or illocutive force of an utterance".

Briz (2005) mentions that the function of this pragmatic mechanism is to get closer to the interlocutor, while distancing himself from the message. This fact explains why attenuation is more common in formal contexts such as work environments, for example. However, it can appear in more general situations where disagreements appear between the participants in the communication.

In summary, Briz (2005) lists three attenuation strategies: strictly pragmatic, semantic-pragmatic and dialogical. The first involves the minimization of the "I" and the "thou" through performative verbs, opinionated expressions, and the impersonalization of the "I." The second strategy consists of grammatical and lexical alteration to shift the responsibility of the speaker. Finally, the third strategy is characterized by the manifestation of a certain alignment to soften disagreement (Gomes, 2013).

Other points exposed by Gomes (2013) are that, first, in addition to the threat of face, mitigation mechanisms tend to appear when the territory is also threatened, and second, that issues such as the theme developed, the purpose of the interaction, the environment, shared knowledge and the social relationship between the participants in the interaction such as geographic origin, for example, also influence the use of mitigating elements.

Taking into account all these factors, especially about the impersonalization of the "I", we will see in the following section, from the linguistic perspective, some considerations about the omission of this pronoun in the Spanish language.

### **THE OMISSION OF YO AND ITS EGOCENTRISM**

In *pro-drop languages*, such as Portuguese and Spanish, the omission of personal pronouns is an interesting linguistic phenomenon that reflects grammatical and pragmatic

aspects of language use. Languages with this characteristic accept their omission in many contexts in a way that more abundant than the appearance of pronouns is their omission (González, 1994).

According to González (1994), the Spanish language, to the detriment of Brazilian Portuguese, is considered null, that is, the subject does not appear, except for three exceptions listed by the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE). The academy says that the explicit use of *yo* basically consists of two functions: to avoid ambiguities or contrasts, to emphasize the action performed by the enunciator. However, Benveniste (1976), in one of his studies, says that one of the duties of *yo* is to mark the subject. For this reason, some cultures are known to suppress *yo* for reasons of courtesy, that is, with the intention of softening the effects of the message.

Taking into account the argument above, one of the functions of the deictic *yo* is to place the subject at the center of the statement, in a prominent position, the term is commonly understood, by some cultures, as egocentric (Vicente Mateu, 1994). Loaded with history, according to epistemological studies, the word *yo* comes from *ego*. This fact may justify the misunderstandings. Therefore, Serrano (2014) reaffirms the idea by saying that the reference to the person himself emphasizes the representation of subjectivity and *ego*.

Taking into account the theoretical overview presented, it is necessary to enter the methodological chapter, so that we present the analytical part so that the proposed objectives are fulfilled.

## METHODOLOGY

We used the qualitative approach as a methodology, because in the proposal we focused on the issues of courtesy in the omission of *yo* in the *corpus* selected to carry out the analysis. According to the precepts of Minayo (2007), the present investigation examines a whole world of beliefs, meanings and attitudes. Generally, this type of approach is adopted in research in the area of pragmatics, because it considers the communicative situation and understands that society and language are inseparable.

According to the objectives, the research is categorized as descriptive, as it details the characteristics of a phenomenon (Gurgel, 2019). In addition, the data are evaluated without the interference of the researcher (Bastos, 2009).

Furthermore, according to the studies of Bauer, Gaskell and Allum (2002), the investigation is classified by sample survey, since the analysis is carried out through the description of the characteristics and linguistic profile of a specific community. To perform



this task, the data were tabulated with the objective of synthesizing the information and describing the characteristics of the phenomenon studied.

Finally, we are based on sociopragmatic studies, which are dedicated to analyzing how people use language to interact and communicate their intentions. In addition to taking into account linguistic aspects, sociopragmatics encompasses the social factors that permeate communication. For this, we based ourselves on the studies of some authors, among them are Briz (2005), Bravo (2002), Haverkate (1994) and Gomes (2013).

## CORPUS AND RESEARCH PROCEDURE

From a linguistic perspective, audiovisual instruments are key tools, as they bring cultures together while highlighting them. It is true that this genre is easily manipulated, since the director organizes his ideas and ideals according to what he wants to convey (Alves, 2024). Thus, it is common to find stereotypes that reinforce cultural and linguistic prejudices. Mostacero Villareal (2012) defends the thesis that these same elements serve to reaffirm reality when one intends to praise, therefore, we will use this statement.

The *corpus* of this research is composed of the statements of the *film Hasta that we will find again*. Released in 2022, the film is rated for ages 12 and up and lasts 1h36min. The choice of the film for analysis was motivated by the use of a more relaxed language and by the emphasis on the linguistic contrast between the characters, emphasizing the elements necessary for the investigation.

The film under review presents a Peru focused on tourism, highlighting the beauties of the country, such as its culture, customs and landscapes. Therefore, it is possible that, through exaggerations in speech or present stereotypes, we can more clearly identify the characteristics related to omission and social image.

That said, in the first stage we selected, in Spanish, some utterances at random, said by the protagonist named Salvador, considering only that the pronoun is not present in the sentence. Next, we made some considerations about the elements that influence the omission.

In the second part, we present in tables the utterances said by Salvador, the context of speech, and the components that contribute to the omission, as exposed by Gomes (2013), Briz (2005, 2007) and Bravo (2002). The objective is to understand how these factors influence the communicative dynamics in the contexts portrayed in the film. With the understanding of the aspects discussed above, we will explore below some examples of omission present in the work.



## ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

After listing the procedure for selecting the statements, we briefly describe eight cases of omission, according to the precepts pointed out by Bravo (2002), Briz (2005), Cantero (1976), González (1994), Gomes (2013) and Serrano (2014).

Cantero (1976) presents the presence of *yo* before a verb of knowledge as common behavior. In this case, the first, we observe the absence of the deictic before a performative verb or knowledge. See:

Chart 1 – Omission due to courtesy

STATEMENT	CONTEXT	PROCEDURE
<i>I believe that we are exactly where we should be</i>	Protagonists talk informally	•Attenuation

Source: prepared by the authors

As already mentioned, this phenomenon often occurs with the emphatic expression of *yo*. For the role of the pronoun in question, the subject opts for omission by using a performative verb that expresses an opinion, in order to mitigate and modalize the utterance, thus avoiding compromise with the veracity of the statement (Briz, 2005). In this context, the speaker relativizes the utterance, exhausting the argumentation to demonstrate uncertainty, in order to remove responsibility for what is said.

Chart 2 – Face preservation

STATEMENT	CONTEXT	PROCEDURE
<i>Ariana, llevo cinco días sin cobertura</i>	The protagonists are on a trail and Salvador finds cell phone signal	• Social Image
<i>Entonces, renuncio a la corporación</i>	Argument between Salvador and his father	• Social Image

Source: prepared by the authors

Although explicit *yo* is recurrent in speech with a merely linguistic function, Cantero (1976) points out that its omission is more numerous, because, in an attempt to protect the face, individuals seek to crush the ego. In a more direct way, in order not to appear rude, the pronoun is avoided and, as already said in the course of the investigation, an attribute that gives identity to egocentric behavior is the full use of the first person singular.

Still along these lines, Cantero (1976) makes it very clear that the topic of conversation and the physical performance significantly interfere in the appearance of the pronoun subject or not. In view of this, the aforementioned author says that the omission of *yo* usually occurs in formal contexts. Although, in this case, it is a discussion between relatives, the type of relationship still requires respect between them, and also because they are dealing with business (Alves, 2024). Therefore, there is a linguistic distance between the two.

Considering this, both statements were uttered motivated by the emotion anger, resulting from a situation of disagreement. In this context, there is a tendency to maintain formality to protect oneself and avoid sounding overly rude, despite the intensity of the situation and the emotion involved. From the point of view of attenuation, it can be stated that this omission of *yo* serves to avoid an aggressive manifestation, influenced by the external factor (Alves, 2024). Gomes (2013) states that the greater the disagreement, the greater the probability of attenuation, aiming to preserve faces or create distance from the message.

However, the tolerance mentioned by Bravo (2002) is broken by the emotional exhaustion of the characters. According to the same author, tolerance is sustained by the basis of autonomy in the sense that Spaniards are not afraid of hurting or having their freedom injured. This characteristic is responsible for reestablishing trust between individuals.

In addition to these cases, five more cases were found where the omission is seen. However, they are justified by linguistic factors. As already mentioned, González (1994), in his thesis, states that the Spanish language is asymmetrical from Brazilian Portuguese because it predominantly presents the null subject pronoun, that is, personal pronouns are not necessarily used, they are identified by other traces in the utterance, such as verbal endings, for example. Anchored in this, let's look at the next table.

Table 3 – Autonomy

STATEMENT	CONTEXT	PROCEDURE
<i>Me levanta todos los días a las 5 a.m. a ejercitar.</i>	Television interview	• Null subject pronoun
<i>Let's say that I am a little maniac.</i>	Television interview	• Null subject pronoun
<i>I'm sure that from hoy habrá un antes y un después en nuestras vidas.</i>	Company audit	• Null subject pronoun
<i>Pero te voy a quemar</i>	Leisure and party time	• Null subject pronoun
<i>No, no soy tan easy</i>	Moment of relaxation between the protagonists	• Null subject pronoun

Source: Prepared by the authors

Returning to Cantero's (1976) speech, omission is more abundant in formal contexts, on the other hand, in informal contexts, to simplify communication the speaker tends to stop repeating his name, this conduct is seen as a behavior of the syntagm. Serrano (2014) confirms this fact when he says that in communicative exchanges, argumentative needs decrease and the use of pronouns decreases.

Finally, in the statements presented in the last painting, the protagonist appears sure of and with certainty in what he says about himself. Among all the statements, this

characteristic is most visible in the third statement, that the context of the speech is a company meeting in celebration of the approval of a new project that will be carried out in a magnificent way because he will be the one who will be in charge, that is, he is sure of his qualities as a professional. In the same way, in the other statements he is sure about his personal attributes.

It is important to mention that this message may not be understood by some cultures, such as those of some Latin countries, for example, as a good dose of autonomy, as the use of positive attributions about oneself is a sign of pride.

## CONCLUSION

During the course of the investigation, we unfolded concepts of linguistics, presenting in a precise way some phenomena studied by pragmatics with a sociocultural bias, based on the studies of sociopragmatics. Taking this as a starting point, we discuss some ideas about courtesy, social image and attenuation that permeate the influence of the omission of the singular person pronoun in Spanish.

Initially, we propose the general objective of identifying the manifestations of courtesy through the omission of *the yo of the protagonist of the film* *Hasta que nos volvamos a ver*, in Portuguese, "Until next time". Consequently, the research was directed to three specific objectives: a) To select the statements where the deictic *yo* is omitted; b) To observe how courtesy influences the phenomenon of omission; c) Identify the facial characteristics that most collaborate with the phenomenon.

Given the general objective, we can conclude, according to the analyses and results found, that the manifestations of social image identified were those of autonomy, preservation of faces and attenuation. Regarding the secondary objectives, or rather, how the phenomenon of courtesy and the attributes of the face appear in the statements, we obtained the result that the characteristics of autonomy are easily perceived, because, during several moments of the plot, the character safely reaffirms his qualities without fear of hurting and having his freedom hurt. In the preservation of faces, tolerance is broken due to emotional exhaustion, so the character preserves himself at a distance when transmitting the message. Finally, we also identified the use of attenuation through the influence of performative verbs.

In view of all the information presented so far, based on the rich verbal morphology of the language and contextual clues, we can say that linguistic identity reflects and shapes our culture, our relationships with others and our worldview. Understanding linguistic



identity helps us better understand the complexity of human communication and the importance of linguistic diversity.

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