Personal *uno* in Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish

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The pronoun *uno* ‘one’ in Spanish is known to have an impersonal use (RAE 2005). Less well-known is the use of *uno* to refer to ‘self’, mainly, the speaker. Some studies have noted this alternation of *uno* with first person personal pronoun *yo* (e.g. Toribio 2000; Gelabert-Desnoyer 2008; Flores-Ferrán 2009) and yet its precise referential status remains unclear. The corpus results from the present study suggest that *uno* referring to the speaker is far from being scarce in either more colloquial or formal contexts. Following Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008), two main types of *uno* are identified: impersonal *uno* (*UNO*<sub>GEN</sub>) and self-referential *uno*. The latter is subdivided into two subtypes: (i) *uno* referring only to the speaker (*UNO*<sub>YO</sub>) and (ii) *uno* referring to the speaker plus other potential referents (*UNO*<sub>YO+</sub>). I claim that these different types of *uno* emerge from two factors: (a) the focus placed on the speaker’s standpoint and (b) the potential domain of reference.

1. Introduction

Impersonal pronouns present challenges because “boundaries between personal and impersonal paradigms are porous” (Malamud 2012). Studies in this area have concentrated on the impersonal readings that personal pronouns can acquire (Kitagawa & Lehrer 1988, Zobel 2011). There has been much less discussion on shifts from an impersonal pronoun to a referential or quasi-personal one.

It is generally accepted that the pronoun *uno* in Spanish has an impersonal use. Even though its impersonal status is well known among Spanish speakers, *uno* may also be used to refer to ‘self’, mainly, the speaker. Some studies have noticed this alternation of *uno* with first person personal pronoun *yo* (e.g. Toribio 2000, Gelabert-Desnoyer 2008, Flores-Ferrán 2009) and yet its precise referential status remains unclear. The aim of this paper is to account for the referential properties that impersonal pronoun *uno* ‘one’ has, as well as for the pragmatic attributes that may trigger the use of referential *uno* over its personal counterpart *yo* ‘I’.

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In particular I have the following four objectives in mind:

1. Describe the range of the different interpretations of *uno*.
2. Examine what kind of contexts enable the personal interpretation of impersonal *uno*, i.e. how we force the deictic reading of *uno* as opposed to the generic one.
3. Analyze what pragmatic properties make referential *uno* distinct from the interpretation of first person singular personal pronoun *yo* and the interpretation of ‘pro-dropped *yo’.
4. Since the interpretation of *uno* referring to oneself has been rarely described in the literature, here I conduct an extensive corpus search of *uno* in Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish so as to compare the use of *uno* with self-reference to impersonal *uno* and show that the former is not a marginal, that is, infrequent, use.

Overall, I demonstrate that *uno* is a unique impersonal pronoun and as such a much more refined categorization of *uno* is required than it has traditionally been recognized. Following Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008), I propose for both colloquial and formal contexts two main types of *uno*: impersonal *uno* and self-referential *uno*. The latter can be further subdivided into two types: (i) *uno* referring only to the speaker and (ii) *uno* referring to the speaker plus other potential referents. I claim that all these different types of *uno* emerge from two different properties: on the one hand, from the focus placed on the speaker’s standpoint and, on the other hand, from the potential domain of reference. Furthermore, I show how these two properties are intrinsically related to the pragmatic contexts that trigger their particular use.

This paper is organized as follows: in §2, I offer a brief review of the basic grammatical properties of *uno* in Spanish, with a special focus on two different varieties of Spanish, Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish, which are under study here. Next, I devote the following sections to the corpus search for the present study: the types of *uno* for the analysis are presented in §3.1; followed by the quantitative results from the corpus search in §3.2; and a qualitative analysis of the data and further discussion in §3.3. Finally, the main findings and consequences, as well as suggestions for future research are gathered in §4. I ultimately conclude that both the pragmatic and referential reasons behind the shift from *yo* to *uno* are distinctive in nature and a cross-linguistic comparison becomes essential to contribute to a better understanding.

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1 Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008) looks into the use of personal *uno* by politicians in the context of the Spanish Parliament. Nevertheless, here I demonstrate how it is also colloquial and widely used outside political discourse.
2. The Basic Properties of Spanish uno in Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish

Prescriptively, according to the Diccionário Panispânico de Dudas (henceforth, DPD), uno can receive an impersonal reading (applicable to ‘anyone and/or everybody’) or deictic reading (referring to the speaker), the latter being generally ignored in literature.

Note the examples in (1). Uno in (1a) receives an impersonal reading since it can be substituted by una persona (‘a person’). By contrast, in (1b), uno acquires a deictic interpretation and, as such, it cannot be replaced by una persona.²

(1) a. Cuando uno mira al sol, se queda como ciego.
   ‘When one looks at the sun one becomes blind.’
   = Cuando una persona mira al sol, se queda como ciego.

b. ¡Qué bien vives! — es que uno/a sabe montárselo.
   ‘How well you live! — because I know how to roll.’
   = Yo sé montármelo.

DPD also observes that when uno is referential it shows gender agreement with the referent, the speaker, as illustrated in (2a). Gómez-Torrego (1992) further claims that referential uno cannot show number agreement: *unos/unas, as shown in (2b).

² It is hard to say what the best translation into English for referential uno is; so I have left it untranslated in the glosses. Even though it might seem possible to translate it as English I, I will argue here that they present a different pragmatic content.
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(2) a. **Uno/a** siempre sabe lo que hace
uno/a always know-3s what that do
‘I always know what to do.’

b. * **Unos** siempre saben lo que hacen
unos always know-3p what that do
‘We always know what to do.’

(Gómez-Torrego 1992: 15)

Interestingly, a generic interpretation of *uno* might show some descriptive content about gender when restricting its domain to only women in general. In (3a), *uno* clearly makes an statement about women in general nowadays and (3b) about women in the 18th century. An impersonal reading is clearly forced in the latter, since it cannot be making a statement about the speaker itself in the 18th century.

(3) a. Si **una** se queda embarazada,
if one-F CL get-3s pregnant-F tiene que ir a ver al médico
have-3s that go to see the doctor
‘If one gets pregnant, one must go see the doctor.’

b. En el siglo XVIII **una?uno**
In the century XVIII one-F?-M siempre llevaba falda
always wore skirt
‘In the 18th century one (ref. women) always wore a skirt.’

For (3b), my native speakers consultants agreed in that *una* sounds better. However, they also accepted the use of *uno* in (3b), although pointing out that *uno* was dispreferred over *una*. By contrast, they could never use *uno* in (3a). A very plausible explanation might be that the feminine adjective in (3a), *embarazada*, with no masculine counterpart for humans (*embarazado*), imposes gender agreement with the subject.

Additionally, *uno*, once introduced in the discourse, may be pro-dropped—in opposition to other personal pronouns in Spanish, which can be pro-dropped without restrictions:
For the purposes of this study, I concentrate on the alternations of *uno* with the first person pronoun *yo* in Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish because these two varieties of Spanish have been claimed to retain subject pronouns in instances where they would be redundant in other dialects (Lipski 2008).

\[(5)\] Cuando *tú* acabe *tú* me avisa  
‘When you finish (you) let me know’  
(Lipski 2008)

Vernacular Dominican Spanish even uses overt subject pronouns for inanimate nouns, which is not found in other Spanish dialects:

\[(6)\] a. [Re: river] **El** tiene poca agua.  
(cf., e.g., Tiene poca agua.)  
‘It has little water.’  

b. [Re: buses] **Ellas se** saben devolver en Villa; **ellas** pasan de largo.  
‘They often turn around in Villa; they pass you by.’  
(Toribio 2000)

This is of significance for the corpus search conducted in this study because verbs with null subjects were not entered owing to identical verb morphology between [+/-] specific *usted* (‘formal you’), *el/ella* (‘he/she’) and *uno* (‘one’). Besides, *usted* and *el/ella* do not share the same possible referents with *uno*, as suggested in Flores-Ferrán (2009).
Last but not least, the overuse of *uno* with first-person singular reference alongside *uno* with impersonal reference in Dominican vernacular has already been noticed (Toribio 2000).

(7) a. **Uno** habla regularcito aquí. (impersonal *uno*)
   (cf., e.g., Se habla regularcito aquí.)
   ‘We speak somewhat normally here.’

   b. **Uno** cuando vino **uno** no sabía mucho el español, porque **uno** habla su inglés. **Uno** miraba a los muchachos jugando y **uno** ahí trancadito. Poco a poco **uno** se adaptó . . . [...] (referential uno)
   (cf., e.g., . . . Cuando [*yo*] vine no sabía mucho el . . .)
   ‘When *I* came *I* didn’t know much Spanish, because *I* spoke English. *I* looked at the kids playing outside and *I* was locked up. Little by little *I* adapted . . .’
   [Adapted from Toribio 2000: 320-321]

The example in (7a) contains an expected use of *uno*, but perhaps what it is most intriguing here is the use of *uno* in (7b). In (7b), *uno* occurs in a series of episodic statements, i.e. sentences that describe an event or situation at a specific time and place (Zobel 2011). This is precisely a context that blocks impersonal interpretations of personal pronouns: any personal pronouns in such sentences have to be interpreted deictically (Zobel 2011). In this case, we have a pronoun that is, in principle, categorized as a ‘proper’ impersonal pronoun whose impersonal reading is blocked and needs to be interpreted deictically as the personal pronoun *I*.

All in all, Spanish *uno* may refer to the speaker or to *people* in general. When referring to the speaker, it shows feminine or masculine gender, but never number. **Uno** can show be dropped after being introduced in the discourse. Its use, though acknowledged by grammar books, still remains unclear. It has been reported to be quite common in vernacular Dominican Spanish (Toribio 2000), a variety of Spanish that tends to use overt subject pronouns, like Puerto Rican Spanish, which I think may trigger the overt use of *uno*, a reason why these are the two varieties under corpus study here. In its place, other dialects might employ a null non-specific plural pronoun or an impersonal *se* construction (Toribio 2000), or even a personal pronoun, like *tú* (singular ‘you’) or *nosotros* (‘we’).

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3 Note however that this is a unique behavior of impersonal *uno*, since the *se*-impersonal construction cannot refer to the speaker when its impersonal reading is blocked: e.g. *Ayer se fue a hacer la compra* ‘I did grocery shopping’, thus *uno* and *se* do not always share the same truth conditions, contra Sánchez López (2002).
3. The Present Study

This section is devoted to the analysis of the corpus search conducted for the present study. First, I introduce and explain the different types of *uno* that I used to classify the examples of overt *uno* alternating with *yo* found in the corpus search. For this, I looked into oral Puerto Rican data and written Dominican data by using the online Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (CREA). Because CREA does not have an oral corpus of Dominican Spanish, I took this opportunity to look into both genres, oral and written, so as to see if there are any notable differences due to formality. Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008) carried a corpus-based study that investigated the purposes behind the use of the impersonal pronoun *uno* by politicians in the context of the Spanish Parliament concluding that it is utilized by politicians to preserve professional face. Here I demonstrate that the impersonal pronoun *uno* serves a wider range of purposes and as such it does not necessarily have to be only linked to higher prestige speech: i.e. *uno* serves as a useful tool for anyone in everyday speech.

3.1. Classification of UNO for the Present Study

Here I provide an explanation of the most relevant features of each category: **UNO**<sub>GEN</sub>, **UNO**<sub>YO</sub> and **UNO**<sub>YO+</sub>. It is worth noting that a careful reading of the context was always required to label *uno* as belonging to one category or another, since the boundaries between the different types crucially rely on context and, as a rule, are not crystal clear.

3.1.1. Impersonal *uno*: **UNO**<sub>GEN</sub>

**UNO**<sub>GEN</sub> stands for the generic interpretation of *uno*. In other words, it applies to people in general, its referent is “indeterminate and potentially indefinite”, and “inclusion of the speaker is possible, but not clear in many cases” (Gelabert-Desnoyer 412-413 (2008)).

This being said, I suggest the following features that contribute to establishing the boundaries of this category.

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<sup>4</sup> I acknowledge that there might be a fourth category of *uno*, as suggested in Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008): *uno* referring only to the hearer. However, since the aim of this study is to investigate the alternations of *uno* with *yo*, this use was disregarded. Besides, throughout the search, I did not find any instance of *uno* that would fit into this category, which further suggests that this type of *uno* may be rare.

<sup>5</sup> On a side note, only instances of pronoun *uno* have been analyzed: numerals (*quiero uno* ‘I want one’), partitives (*uno de... ‘one of...’), and fixed expressions (e.g. *uno a uno* ‘one by one’) were not taken into account, as suggested in Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008).
(8) **Features of UNO\textsubscript{GEN}**

- It can be substituted for *cualquiera/*todos/*las personas* (‘anyone/everyone/people’) but not for *yo* (‘I’) while keeping the same intended meaning as the original sentence. It is also comparable to the impersonal ‘one’ in English.
- In principle, it does not present gender and it can never be plural.
- Its reading is blocked in episodic statements.
- It allows temporal modifiers like *en el siglo X* (‘back in the X\textsuperscript{th} century’), whereas it rejects temporal modifiers like *ayer* (‘yesterday’). This is because the former allows for generic statements whereas the latter is likely to restrict the domain of quantification in a way that a generalization becomes unavailable.
- Prescriptively, according to PDP, the reflexive pronoun that it can take is *uno mismo* (‘oneself’) and not *sí mismo* (something like ‘himself/herself’) because the latter requires a specific referent. Note that the use of the reflexive pronoun *sí mismo* blocks the impersonal interpretation, as in (8’b).

\begin{align*}
(8')\text{a.}& \quad \textbf{Uno} \text{ no puede ir en contra de } \textbf{uno mismo}  \\
& \text{‘One cannot go against oneself’}  \\
(8')\text{b.}& \quad \textbf{Uno} \text{ no puede ir en contra de } \textbf{sí mismo}  \\
& \text{‘I cannot go against myself’}
\end{align*}

Finally, consider (9) extracted from the corpus search for an example of this use of *uno*, UNO\textsubscript{GEN}.

(9)  
Porque el mundo está organizado para que *uno* lleve a sus viejos al cementerio, no para llevar a sus hijos (by a father who lost his daughter of 6 months old) (CREA; Dominican Spanish)  
‘Because the world is organized in such a way that one takes one’s parents to the cemetery and not one’s kids.’

Regarding the context in which this sentence was uttered, this example would be evidence of the fact that inclusion of the speaker is possible but not necessary. Also, *uno* here clearly refers to a lawlike statement about people in general.
3.1.2. Self-Referential uno: **UNOYO** and **UNOYO**

3.1.2.1. YO: **UNOYO**

UNOYO stands for one of the referential interpretations of uno: it is the type of uno that exclusively refers to the speaker (similar to self-referential uno in Gelabert-Desnoyer (2008)). Thus, here, uno makes reference to the experience of the speaker and, as such, it can be only substituted by the first person personal pronoun yo. A list of the characteristics that define this category is presented in (10):

(10) **Features of UNOYO**

- It can be substituted for yo (‘I’), but not for cualquiera/ todos/ las personas (‘anyone/everyone/people in general’), while preserving the intended meaning of the original sentence.
- It shows gender, i.e. uno/una, but it does not show plural form.
- Its reading is forced in episodic statements.
- It allows temporal modifiers that refer to possible worlds that can include the speaker in their domains, like ayer (‘yesterday’), but it rejects temporal modifiers like en el siglo X (‘back in the Xth century’) because these make reference to possible worlds that clearly exclude the speaker.
- The reflexive pronoun that it takes is sí mismo (comparable to ‘himself/herself’)—since sí requires a specific referent—but it does not take uno mismo (‘oneself’). Furthermore, it cannot accept mí mismo (comparable to ‘myself’), but this is not intriguing if we consider that even in this reading uno keeps the grammatical properties of person and number of a regular third person singular pronoun. This is illustrated in (10’):

(10’) Finalmente ayer uno se convenció a sí mismo/ *mí mismo/ *uno mismo

‘Finally yesterday I convinced myself.’

Finally, (11) would represent an example of this use of self-referential uno: UNOYO.

(11) Es muy estimulante, sobre todo en el arte, encontrarse con estudiantes que pueden apreciar otras posibilidades de trabajo que uno, a veces, no las ve (by a History of Art professor) (CREA, oral data from Puerto Rican Spanish).

‘It is stimulating, above all in the realm of art, to find students that can appreciate other job possibilities that I, sometimes, cannot see.’
Note that *uno* here seems to originate from the speaker’s own experiences and nobody else’s. It only reflects the experience of the speaker and can only be substituted for *yo*. Furthermore, in this particular example, it seems that the use of *uno* may have been chosen over the direct self-referring use of *yo* because the speaker may not want to directly admit possible failure: the fact of not realizing what his/her own students are able to see. For this, the speaker may choose to distance from his/her own experience by using *uno*.

### 3.1.2.2. YO + wider domain: UNO\_YO+

UNO\_YO+ stands for a referential interpretation of *uno*: it refers to the speaker and other potential referents (Gelabert-Desnoyer 2008). Thus, here I maintain that there is another self-referential *uno*, distinct from UNO\_YO, which has a wider domain in that it is not exclusively linked to the speaker but also to other potential referents that may share the speaker’s circumstances, conditions or experiences. Hence, UNO\_YO+ has a more open interpretation than UNO\_YO and a narrower interpretation than UNO\_GEN because it includes more than just the speaker and yet does not refer to all people in general. Even though it points to a more universal experience, it is still related to first-person experience. The speaker thinks that the same applies to someone else: i.e. there exist potential referent(s), no matter whether it is the hearer or someone else under the same circumstances as the speaker.

Consider (12) for a list of properties of UNO\_YO+:

(12) **Features of UNO\_YO+**

- It is wider in domain than UNO\_YO but still self-referential clearly linked to 1\textsuperscript{st} person reference (Gelabert-Desnoyer 2008).
- It can be substituted for something like “I and anyone else under my own circumstances” or “I and people like me”. Thus, it presents a more generic reading than UNO\_YO but a less universal reading than UNO\_GEN in that not everyone qualifies as a referent.
- It shows masculine and feminine gender: *uno/una*; but it does no longer depend only on the gender of the speaker but on the common gender among all potential referents. It does not show plural form: *unos.*

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6 I believe this use of UNO\_YO, may be compared to the use of stressed *men* in Modern West Frisian in that both of them may carry a denotation ‘people like me’, as Hoekstra (2010) suggested for *men*. However this warrants further justification, a reason why a deeper analysis into this will be pursued in future work.
- It cannot occur in episodic statements or, to say the least, its use seems to be marginal in such a context. This might be due to its more generic flavor than UNOYO.
- It may marginally accept temporal modifiers like ayer (‘yesterday’) and, certainly, it cannot accept temporal modifiers like en el siglo X (‘back in the Xth century’), which make reference to a possible world beyond the scope of the speaker’s experiences.
- Finally, it should prefer the reflexive pronoun sí mismo (comparable to ‘herself/himself’) and disfavor the reflexive pronoun uno mismo (comparable to ‘oneself’) since the speaker himself/herself is a definite referent included in the domain of possible referents of UNOYO+, as shown in (12’).

(12’) Como académico uno se convence a sí mismo/ #uno mismo de que estudiar es lo correcto.
‘As an academic, “I and presumably any other academic” convinces himself/herself that studying is the right thing to do.’

Next, note (13) for an example of the use of UNOYO+:

(13) Es decir que en esta profesión uno, a veces goza, ¿verdad?, y tiene la gratitud de de muchas personas pero también tiene la la ingritud (by a lawyer)
(CREA, oral data from Puerto Rican Spanish).
‘That is to say that in this profession one (I and probably any other lawyer) sometimes enjoys, right? and has the gratitude of many people but also has the ingratitude.’

All in all, this use seems to carry an implicature that the speaker assumes that the same applies to any other person in his/her own position.

### 3.1.3. Summary of the features of the different types of uno

See Table 1 for a summary of the different characteristic features of the three types of *uno* proposed and discussed above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substituter</th>
<th>UNO_GEN</th>
<th>UNO_YO</th>
<th>UNO_YO+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘anyone/ everyone/people’</td>
<td>‘I’</td>
<td>‘I and…’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Masc/?fem</td>
<td>Masc/fem</td>
<td>Masc/fem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic statement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>#/?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the Xth century

Table 1. Features of Types of uno

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflexive pronoun</th>
<th>uno mismo</th>
<th>sí mismo</th>
<th>sí mismo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yesterday</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>#/?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Xth century</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Quantitative Results from the Corpus Search

After an extensive corpus search using, on the one hand, oral Puerto Rican data and, on the other hand, written Dominican data from CREA, the results show no apparent difference whatsoever between oral, and hence more colloquial speech, and written, and hence more formal speech. As the tables below demonstrate, the impersonal pronoun uno is used in both Spanish varieties and it is significantly utilized beyond the use of UNOGEN. In fact, the number of uses found of UNOYO and UNOYO+ together was greater than the number of uses of UNOGEN (60% vs. 40% from oral Puerto Rican data; 68% vs. 32% from written Dominican data).

See the two tables below for comparative purposes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOKENS (116)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNOGEN</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOYO</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOYO+</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Oral data from Puerto Rican Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOKENS (97)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNOGEN</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOYO</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOYO+</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Written data from Dominican Spanish

Therefore, all these numbers suggest that uno referring to the speaker is not a marginal use at all in either more colloquial or formal contexts. Hence, much more credit needs to be given to this use in traditional grammar books and textbooks. The results indicate that speakers do, in fact, resort to the referential impersonal pronoun uno to refer to themselves and perhaps to avoid the directness attributed to the first person singular personal pronoun yo. For this, a qualitative analysis of the data is needed, which takes us to the next section.

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7 The written data was extracted from magazines, books and newspapers.
8 The percentages are based on the total number of examples that were identified: 116 tokens for Oral PR data and 97 tokens for Dominican data. The important point here is to illustrate that it is not every time that uno is used that it has a generic interpretation.
3.3. Pragmatic Analysis of the Data & Further Discussion

In general terms, “the indefinite pronoun uno seems to be a useful tool to avoid the role of an individual actor so as to turn it into a more neutral force” (Quesada 1997, c.f. Ramirez 2007). Throughout the corpus search, I have noticed how the speaker goes back and forth using the yo and uno forms when referring to himself/herself, as in (14).

(14) Entonces uno se va asociando con las formas del arte y (YO) decidí luego me fui a estudiar a Italia, seis meses, a Florencia. ¡Qué maravilloso! (by a university student from PR) ‘Then one (‘I’) gets familiar with the different forms of art and (I) decided then to go to Italy to study, for six months, in Florence. How wonderful!’

Hence, in a sentence like (14), though it may be true that the speaker’s goal is to hide behind the neutral force of the pronoun uno, this cannot be the whole story. More specifically, I question what pragmatic reasons underlie the speaker’s goal.

This section intends to demonstrate that there are certain discourse contexts in which speakers prefer to use the impersonal pronoun uno with self-reference instead of the first person singular personal pronoun yo. First, I focus on the pragmatics that may trigger the use of UNOY_O over overt yo or even ‘pro-dropped’ yo (in ‘pro-dropped’ yo, less emphasis is placed on the speaker’s standpoint than with overt yo). Second, I concentrate on the pragmatic contexts that favor the use of UNOY_O over yo or even UNOGEN. For this, I provide various examples found throughout the corpus search that substantiate the pragmatic differences⁹.

To start with, observe the following examples of UNOY_O together with a plausible explanation of the discursive functions that they fulfill. The first three cases (15-17) involve a statement about politics, which suggests that the speaker is avoiding being held directly responsible for the political judgment that is being uttered:

(15) como el gobierno tenía un interés en en perseguir la bolita, el caso se convirtió en una cuestión de política del gobierno, y no una cuestión de justicia, como era que uno entendía que debía de ser. Pero eso sucede aquí y sucede en muchos países que, cuando el gobierno tiene una actitud pues las cortes tratan de mantener esa política (oral PR data from CREA)

⁹ Some examples may have been shortened or simplified for better illustrative purposes.
‘as the Government had its own interests […], the case became a question of politics of the government, and not a question of justice, like I thought it had to be. But this happens here and happens in many countries: when the government has character, the courts try to maintain this politics.’

(16) El gobierno y el Presidente están cogiendo fama de cobardes. No importa que se le razone […] a uno con ese comentario que lo que ocurre es que el Presidente Fernández está tratando de hacer un gobierno distinto […] (written Dominican data from CREA)

‘The government and the President are getting the fame of being cowards. It doesn’t matter whether they try to convince ‘me’ with that comment that what is really happening is that President Fernández is trying to make a different government.’

(17) porque la realidad era que uno no acababa de ver que la justicia pudiera, ni quisiera, funcionar en medio del caos que se organizó aquí […] (written Dominican data from CREA)

‘because the reality was that I couldn’t see that justice could, not even, function in the middle of the chaos that was produced around here […]’

Hence, in (15), (16) and (17) the speaker’s goal may be to distance himself/herself from the political, and probably controversial, point of view.

The next two examples illustrate how the speaker is also trying not to self-ascribe himself/herself to contexts in which negative opinions are being uttered or not to directly admit his/her incapability or failure on something:

(18) Las cosas se han puesto tan complicadas que a veces uno no tiene tiempo ni de reflexionar (written Dominican data from CREA)

‘Things have become so complicated that sometimes I do not have time to even reflect.’

(19) la perfección, cosa que no ocurría con las de cemento por mucho que uno intentara equilibrarlas (written Dominican data from CREA)

‘perfection, a thing that would not happen with the ones made of cement as much as I tried to balance them.’
Thus, (18) and (19) constitute two examples in negative contexts in which the speaker is trying to neutralize the negativity or self-pity and his/her own failure at something by using the pronoun *uno*, instead of *yo*.

Another pragmatic motivation that I encountered that triggers the use of UNO_YO over *yo* is avoidance of sounding too arrogant or pretentious:

(20) ¿Cómo te sientes?
Un poco nervioso, pero eso es natural porque *uno* siempre quiere que todo salga bien. Es importante y halagador cuando se le reconoce a *uno* el trabajo de todo un año (written Dominican data from CREA)
‘How do you feel? A bit nervous, but this is natural because *I* always want everything to turn out well. It is important and flattering when *I* am recognized for the work throughout the whole year.’

(21) [había] ciertas reglas dentro de las que, por muy jodonas que fueran, *uno* se acostumbró a vivir, mientras que ellos […]
(written Dominican data from CREA)
‘there were certain rules within which, no matter how harsh they were, *I* became used to living with, while others […].’

Furthermore, in such contexts, it seems that *uno* allows the speaker to admit his/her accomplishments/achievements/prestige while avoiding the direct use of *yo*. Otherwise the use of *yo* would be perceived as inelegant, inadequate, or non-professional.

The final two examples of UNO_YO illustrate that *uno* also serves the purpose to avoid self-ascription to a very personal statement that might be a too open display of the speaker’s feelings—as in (22)—or sound inappropriate—as in (23)—otherwise:

(22) Al principio, debido a la separación del ámbito familiar, resultó un poco difícil; pero luego,[…], *uno* llega a sentir y apreciarlos como si fuesen tus propios hermanos (written Dominican data from CREA)
‘At the beginning, due to the separation within the family, it was a bit hard; but later on, *I* got to appreciate them as though they were my own brothers.’

(23) Las mujeres son todas iguales, pero algunas huelen tan bien que *uno* no las puede dejar (written Dominican data from CREA)
‘All women are the same, but some smell so good that I cannot leave them.’

Thus, what all these different contexts have in common is the involvement of delicate circumstances, in which, depending on how close the relationship with the addressee is, the use of yo is inappropriate or inelegant in that the speaker may be too honest: e.g. the speaker may show discontent commenting on something negative, or may be crossing the line of respect.

As far as UNOYO+ is concerned, its use is basically triggered in two contexts. On the one hand, as already suggested, when the speaker believes that the same applies to other people under his/her own circumstances. This use is generally elicited when the speaker makes a claim about his/her own profession, as in (24-26).

(24) La gente no piensa que los que nos dedicamos a ese negocio ganamos pequeñas sumas de dinero; o sea, que uno prácticamente trabaja para estar cansado (written Dominican data from CREA)
‘People do not think that the ones that are dedicated to this business earn little sums of money; that is, uno practically works to be tired.’

(25) - ¿Sentiste dudas alguna vez acerca de tu vocación?
- Sí, claro, y eso es normal, que uno se pregunte si puede concluir con los retos de esa vocación, si uno puede superar todos los inconvenientes que se le presentan en el camino (written Dominican data from CREA)
‘Have you ever doubt about your vocation? Yes, of course, and it is normal that uno wonders if [uno] can accomplish the challenges of this vocation, if uno can overcome all the inconveniences that are presented along the way.’

(26) Somos atletas y no hay precio que pague que uno pierda una pierna, un brazo o la vida (written Dominican data from CREA)
‘We are athletes and there is no price that pays if uno looses his/her leg, arm or life.’

On the other hand, UNOYO- may also be used to try to elicit the hearer’s approval. In other words, when the speaker wants to manipulate the hearer’s emotional focus. The speaker expects the hearer to share his/her opinions and to subscribe to his/her statement, as in (27) and (28).
(27) Me gusta leer, cocinar, yo cocino siempre, me gusta estar en la casa mucho, me gusta mucho mi casa, uno se va, cuando está viviendo en su casa y se va lejos, tanta falta que le hace a uno, ¿verdad?. Eso era tan distinto antes antes uno no podía salir sola, así como salen las muchachas ahora, ¿sabe? (oral PR data from CREA)
‘I like reading, cooking, I always cook, I like staying at home very much, I love my house, when uno leaves home uno misses home so much, right? This was so different before, before uno could not go out alone, not in the same way as women do nowadays, you know?’

(28) uno va al sitio y si no le dan una explicación de del propósito del lugar y para qué se usaba, y qué se hacía allí puede que le queda decepcionado, ¿no? (oral PR data from CREA)
‘uno goes to the place and if he/she is not given an explanation of the purpose of the place or what the place was for, and what used to be done there, [uno] can become disappointed, right?’

In these two examples above, the speaker uses expressions such as sabe? Verdad? No es? ves? (‘right?’, ‘Isn’t it?’) that suggest that the speaker expects the hearer to accept/agree.

Therefore, UNOYO+ is not all about the speaker as UNOYO is since it also takes into account the hearer’s emotional focus and whether there are other potential referents that might also subscribe to what is being uttered.

Up to this point, let me summarize the pragmatic contexts that may trigger the use of self-referential uno in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNOYO</th>
<th>UNOYO+</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>» To avoid arrogance</td>
<td>» To try to elicit the hearer’s approval. They are usually accompanied by expressions such as sabe? Verdad? No es? ves? (‘right?’, ‘Isn’t it?’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» To avoid getting too much involved in political/social opinions</td>
<td>» To suggest that the same applies to ‘people like me’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» To avoid yo (‘I’) in negative opinions, either about oneself or somebody else</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» To avoid directly admitting one’s failure or inability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Triggering Pragmatic Contexts of Self-Referential uno

Based on these results, I propose a diagram that shows the speaker’s choice of preference from YO to the three different types of UNO
according to the focus given on the speaker’s standpoint and the domain of reference of the pronoun:

![Diagram showing the choice between 'YO' and 'UNO' according to focus and domain of reference.]

This diagram consists of two hierarchies: both of them depart from the first person singular personal pronoun *yo* (overt *yo*) and go from left to right. I claim that overt *yo* shows two basic properties: on the one hand, (i) it places a direct focus on the speaker; on the other hand, (ii) it can only refer deictically to the speaker and nobody else. From this, it follows that depending on which property and the intensity at which such a property varies, the use of *yo* will no longer qualify for the designated speaker’s purpose. If the speaker’s strategy is not to speak of himself/herself directly—i.e. the speaker wants to place less focus on his/her standpoint—then he/she will opt for ‘pro-dropped’ *yo* (neutral *I*) or even *UNO_yo*. The speaker might choose the former in contexts where there is no ambiguity that ‘pro-dropped’ *yo* is still making reference to the speaker as well as when there is no special need to emphasize such a reference. On the other hand, the speaker might opt for UNO_yo when he/she wants to gain some distance or detach from his/her experience. This may be triggered in contexts that carry negative or controversial content, such as the ones listed in Table 4. All of them involve social codes that would generally make the utterance be perceived as inelegant or inappropriate if the speaker had chosen otherwise, i.e. if the speaker had chosen *yo* over *uno*.

The other hierarchy has to do with the property of reference. The pronoun *yo* clearly refers only to the speaker and nobody else. If the speaker thinks that other people in the domain of reference may qualify as referents as well—i.e. may share, be sympathetic for, or subscribe to his/her experience—then the speaker opts for the pronoun *uno* instead of *yo*. UNO_yo+ would be used when the speaker thinks that, other than himself/herself, there are only a few potential referents out of all the
possible entities in the domain. This correlates with the fact that the speaker here may be trying to elicit the hearer’s approval (see Table 4) because either the speaker may assume that the hearer is one of the potential referents and is asking for confirmation or the speaker wants the hearer to corroborate and agree to the implicature that there are other potential referents. Finally, if the reference of the pronoun may be applied to any entity in the domain, UNO\textsubscript{GEN} is used instead, thus this being the only instance where \textit{uno} behaves as an impersonal pronoun.

### 4. Conclusions and Future Research

The pronoun \textit{uno}, traditionally classified as \textit{impersonal} in grammar books and textbooks, is far richer in terms of its potential referents and discursive functions than it has been traditionally recognized. The analysis offered in this study thus contradicts the traditional categorization of \textit{uno} as impersonal and would be evidence against any claim that asserts that with \textit{uno} ‘one’ no specific person is being picked.

I have proposed three different types of \textit{uno}: UN\textsubscript{GEN}, UNO\textsubscript{YO}, and UNO\textsubscript{YO}—from more generic to more self-referential—on which I have based my corpus search on Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish data. After analyzing the data, both quantitatively and qualitatively, I have demonstrated that self-referential \textit{uno} is far from being an infrequent use, which calls for a revision of the traditional classification of \textit{uno} as an impersonal pronoun. Additionally, I have suggested a two-way-hierarchy—(i) one intrinsically related to the domain of reference of the pronoun and (ii) the other one based on the focus placed on the speaker’s standpoint—which explains the speaker’s choice of preference from \textit{YO} to \textit{UNO}, finally leading to distinctive pragmatic and discursive contexts.

In future work, I would like to pursue more corpus research in other varieties of Spanish to determine if there are any notable dialectical differences, since the two varieties analyzed here are known to be closely related (Suárez Büdenbender 2010). Based on this study, the Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish \textit{uno} do not appear to differ in usage; however it is possible that further investigation would reveal differences between the two. It would also be very useful to have controlled contexts to elicit the data of our concern by recording speakers or conducting surveys asking for pronominal choices of preference. Likewise, a deeper analysis on the switches from overt \textit{yo} to covert \textit{yo} is warranted, so as to be able to refine the tendency from overt \textit{yo} towards UNO\textsubscript{YO}. 
Another interesting line of research would be the investigation of other pronominal shifts within the same language: such as the combinations between impersonal *uno* and impersonal *tu* (singular ‘you’) or impersonal *nosotros* (‘we’), which I believe to be semantically similar and yet pragmatically different.

Ultimately, comparing Spanish *uno* to impersonals in other languages is required, and left for future work, so as to better understand its unique behaviour. This will allow us to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the referential status of (im)personal pronouns in general, which will contribute to a better understanding of the puzzle that *uno* poses for a theory of impersonal pronouns.

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