



Pronouns and verbs as gender markers in Italian parliamentary speeches: Intersecting gender, communication, and politics

Pronomi e verbi come marcatori di genere nei discorsi parlamentari Italiani: Intersezioni fra genere, comunicazione e politica

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ABSTRACT

Our starting point is that there are gender differences in the use of language linked to masculine/feminine role identity, and not to alleged essentialist, intrinsic features. The research is a contribution to the understanding of links between linguistic behaviors and socio-psychological processes, as these relate to agency and ingroup/outgroup differentiation and to gender roles. We conducted our descriptive study on 441 parliamentary speeches delivered between 1976 and 2009 by four Italian politicians, differentiated by gender and political affiliation. We expected a higher degree of agency as well as higher ingroup/outgroup differentiation for male than for female politicians with a trend towards a lesser degree of gender differences in the later period (1994-2009) because of the feminine emancipatory processes in the Italian society and parliament. The indicators of high/low agency were: pronouns and verbs in the first person singular/plural, and conditional modal verbs. For the ingroup/outgroup differentiation, we used pronouns in the first and second person plural. We conducted a quantitative textual analysis and a qualitative contextual analysis. Our results confirm the hypothesis in part. We advanced some contextualist considerations to interpret the outcomes.

Keywords: Parliamentary speeches and gender differences; agency; ingroup/outgroup differentiation; linguistic devices; quantitative and qualitative textual analysis.

RIASSUNTO

Il nostro punto di partenza è che ci sono differenze di genere, nell'uso del linguaggio, legate all'identità dei ruoli maschili/femminili, e non a presunte caratteristiche intrinseche di tipo essenzialista. La ricerca è un contributo alla comprensione dei collegamenti tra comportamenti linguistici e processi socio-psicologici, riferiti all'agentività, alla differenziazione ingroup/outgroup, e ai ruoli di genere. Abbiamo condotto il nostro studio descrittivo su 441 discorsi parlamentari pronunciati tra il 1976 e il 2009 da quattro politici italiani, differenziati per genere e appartenenza politica. Ci aspettavamo un più alto grado di agentività, nonché una maggiore differenziazione ingroup/outgroup nei parlamentari, rispetto alle parlamentari, con un andamento verso una minore differenziazione di genere nell'ultimo periodo (1994-2009), a causa dei processi di emancipazione femminile nella società e nel parlamento italiani. Gli indicatori di bassa/alta agentività erano: pronomi e verbi alla prima persona singolare/plurale, e verbi modali condizionali. Per la differenziazione ingroup/outgroup, abbiamo usato: pronomi alla prima e seconda persona plurale. Abbiamo condotto un'analisi testuale quantitativa e un'analisi contestuale qualitativa. I nostri risultati confermano solo in parte le ipotesi. Nell'interpretazione dei risultati abbiamo avanzato alcune considerazioni contestualiste.

Parole chiave: discorsi parlamentari e differenze di genere; agentività; differenziazione ingroup/outgroup; dispositivi linguistici; analisi testuale quantitativa e qualitativa.

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RdP

Introduction

The research framework is in the tradition of social representations (SRs) studies, which from the beginning interpreted language as a constitutive aspect of SRs, a non-neutral tool of communication, a social action capable of reproducing, confirming, or denying social norms, activating specific inferential psychological processes (Billig, 1988; Flick, 1998; van Dijk, 1998). This focus on language is also present in the recent developments of mainstream social psychology (Holtgraves, 2014) and has its roots in the linguistic turn, which started with the affirmation of a rhetorical-discursive approach (Billig, 1987; Potter & Edwards, 1999; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

An integral part of this significant attention to language has been the growing sensitivity for the relationship between language and gender issues from a critical point of view (Crawford & Kaufman, 2006; Freed, 2003; Mulac, 2006; Sensales & Areni, 2015, 2016; Sensales, Areni, & Dal Secco, 2012, 2013, 2016a and b; Stokoe, 2005; Weatherall, 1998, 2012; Weatherall & Gallois, 2003). Assuming this attentional focus, our descriptive study analyzes how specific linguistic forms can be used differently in the speech of men and women parliamentarians (MPs), thus functioning as gender markers building different social representations of MPs. They are hypothetically not immutable over time, but sensitive to the specific historical cultural context in which the language is acted.

Our starting point is that there are gender differences in the use of language that are linked to masculine/feminine role identity, and not to alleged essentialist intrinsic features. In this vein, the present work is a contribution to the advancement of understanding of links between linguistic behaviors and socio-psychological processes, as these relate to agency and ingroup/outgroup differentiation, and to gender roles. This significant field of inquiry is not yet fully developed, particularly in reference to the parliamentary context, where attention to linguistic analysis has only started in the last few years in mainstream fields (Yu, 2014; Bright, 2012) as in critical fields (Bijeikienė & Utka, 2006; Christie, 2002; Formato, 2014; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016; Wodak, 2003). The present work is an attempt to address this gap, particularly large in the area of psychological analysis, promoting a focus on gender, language, psychology, and politics.

As pointed out by Alice Freed (2003), since the beginning of the 1990s, research on the interaction among language, sex, and gender has began to question sex and gender differences as a starting point for an explanation of linguistic behavior. In fact, results of research in the field of sociolinguistics are beginning to highlight the great divergence in linguistic practices of men and women and, at the same time, the similarity and frequent overlap of their language use. Therefore, researchers have questioned the essentialist and bipolar conceptions of gender in favor of a model that privileged differences, context, and performativity, countering the generalized assertions about gender. The generalizing in the past had brought about a conception based on a binary opposition that led to the reification of the notion of gender differences as natural, static, and unchanging. The basic idea, rejected since the 1990s, was that men and women are essentially different and that they reflect, in the way they talk, this profound difference. Freed argues that, in more recent years, it has been shown that the insistence on linguistic behavior, marked by gender, was part of a mechanism that simultaneously built and tried to preserve the traditional gender distinctions through the rhetoric of difference. In this logic, authenticity and naturalness of sexual and gender differences are interpreted as part of an ideological battle that maintains the distinctions, and preserves the belief that men and women are essentially different beings (Freed, 2003, pp. 714–718).

In Italy, the critical perspective applied to language, gender, and politics has not at this time been fully deployed, with only few studies concerning the Italian Parliament (Formato, 2014; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016), while the limited empirical studies in the more general political context favor an approach to gender differences of binary type in language, at the same time avoiding the essentialist perspective. This approach is able to provide empirical evidence for gender differences in language, such as in the case of Basile's (2010) study, which showed how the political communication of women politicians reflects and reproduces, in part, the prevalent asymmetries and stereotypes of society.

In our research, we will try to give an account of the constructionist perspective applied to specific linguistic devices, considered as possible gender markers, as used by two pairs of men and women parliamentarians. From a non-essentialist point of view, we will attempt to show the possible diachronic dynamic located in the specific historical and cultural contexts. The objective of our study is the exploration of any gender distinctions in agency (Bazzanella, 2002, 2009b, 2014; Duranti, 2004; Donzelli & Fasulo, 2007; Formato, 2014; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016; Sensales, Areni, & Dal Secco, 2012, 2013) and in the expression of the dynamics of ingroup/outgroup differentiation (Bazzanella, 2009b; Iñigo-Mora, 2004, 2010, 2013; Formato, 2014; Milesi, 2011; Milesi & Catellani, 2013; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016; Serino & Pugliese, 2006; Tajefel, 1982; van Dijk, 2000, 2010) among men and women parliamentarians.

With regards to agency, this construct has received considerable attention over the '70s and the '80s, not only in language studies but also in the field of sociology, and later in other disciplines such as social psychology, media studies, and cultural anthropology (Ahearn, 2001; Carli, 1990, 2006; Hall & Donaghue, 2012; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). Without entering too broad and complex a debate about its meaning and implications, it is important to mention the definition proposed by Duranti (2004), according to which agency refers to a characteristic of those entities (1) which have some degree of control over their own behavior, (2) whose actions in the world affect other entities (and sometimes their own), and (3) whose actions are the object of evaluation. Duranti proposes some hypotheses regarding the possible manipulation of agency through language, particularly by the use of impersonal constructions, nominalizations, and passive verbal forms. More specifically, Duranti outlines five universal linguistic statements. These include the following two that guided our analysis: the universal statement number 1, which affirms that all languages allow for encoding agency, and the universal statement number 3, which maintains that all languages offer ways to modulate or blur the agency of certain entities (by being omitted, or by being encoded into syntactic roles that are not explicitly agentic). According to this perspective, specific grammatical markers, such as the pronouns, constitute concrete indicators of agency at work in language.

In Italy, the aforementioned Basile (2010) brought attention to a small sample of 18 interviews – published in 2009 in the three dailies *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, and *L'Unità*– with men and women involved in politics, in order to observe any differing linguistic-communicative uses related to agency. The results showed differences in language that proved greater agency for men. In particular, among the linguistic phenomena observed, clear differences were noted in the use of verbal modes, such as the fact that women used the conditional (a non-assertive modality, subject to the fulfillment of the given conditions) in 62.9% of cases, and in the type of diathesis: for example, women used the passive diathesis (a mechanism of language that is typically depersonalizing because it locates the subject in a subordinate position) more than men, at a rate of 68.6%. In contrast, there were more nuanced differences in the use of the person category; for example, just over half of men used the first person plural, while just over half of the women used impersonal forms (which tend to depersonalize, putting the agent in second order).

Concerning the ingroup/outgroup dynamics, as studied by Tajfel (1982), they are based on the process of social categorization that tends to order the world into meaningful categories, “We-Us”/ “You-Them,” through which comparison between positive social identities of groups is strengthened. In this way, the comparison is oriented toward acquiring, maintaining, and defending the prestige and status of one’s group membership through a process of differentiation that gives positivity to its group and discredit to the antagonist group. Milesi (2011) pointed out that political leadership is founded on a strategic construction of “We-Us,” that is, the <ability to arouse in its listeners a shared sense of ‘We’ functional to its political projects and the ability to present themselves as the best spokesperson of the ‘We’>¹ (p. 162, our English translation). In particular, the “We” is inclusive of all those who intend to mobilize, by selecting the ingroup’s features functional to its project. As evidenced by Serino and Pugliese (2006), in political processes there are often

¹ <capacità di suscitare nei propri ascoltatori un senso condiviso del “noi”, funzionale ai propri progetti politici e alla capacità di presentare se stessi come i migliori portavoce di quel “noi.”>

superordinate recategorizations, used as a strategy to build and expand consensus.

At an international level, recent studies exist that focus on the role, in politics and in Parliament, of pronouns as markers of agency (Bazzanella, 2002, 2009b, 2014; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016), ingroup/outgroup dynamics (Bazzanella, 2009a; van Dijk, 2000; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016), and gender differentiation (Bijeikienė & Utkā, 2006; Formato, 2014; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016). There are also some surveys focused on the role of pronouns in the processes of social categorization reflecting social hierarchies. In particular, the results of five studies –both in experimental and natural sets– published by Kacwicz, Pennebaker, Davis, Jeon, and Graesser (2013) have led researchers to conclude that people with higher status systematically use the first person plural more frequently, and the second person singular less frequently, than the first person singular. Another study by Sendén, Lindholm, and Sikström (2013) considered pronouns as markers of social categories. In this case, the focus was on the evaluative context selected for the different pronouns. The results showed that individuals in positive contexts tend to use self-inclusive, rather than self-exclusive pronouns, and that they tend to use individual, as opposed to collective, pronouns. However, in an interpersonal context, the evaluative differences between the first person singular and plural were diminished, whereas in a context of confrontation between groups (inter-group condition) the evaluative gap between self-inclusive and self-exclusive pronouns increased. If we assume, as does the model (Tajfel, 1982), that the oppositions “We-Us”/“You-Them” refer, especially in politics, to the dynamics of competition and conflict, then it is reasonable to expect that female culture, being more tied to cooperation values (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Spence & Helmreich, 1978), is less characterized by this contrapositive dynamic, although on this question there is not a strong body of research.

In our survey, the agency and dynamics of ingroup/outgroup differentiation were detected through specific linguistic markers relating to personal pronouns and verbal modes, present in the parliamentary speeches of four politicians. In particular, for the agency we detected (1a) pronouns that varied from the first person singular *Io* (“I,” less agentive form) to the first person plural *Noi* (“We,” more agentive form), and (1b) use of the modal conditional form of the verbs (less agentive form). For ingroup/outgroup differentiation we detected (2) pronouns that varied between the first and second person plural (*Noi* versus *Voi* [“We” vs. “You”]).

Starting from the literature mentioned above, we have made assumptions about the parliamentary speeches to be analyzed, being aware that they represent a specific form, a sub-genre, of political communication by fixed, recurrent communication patterns (Ilie, 2006), largely defined by their contextual properties (van Dijk, 2003), in which there is almost never an exact reproduction of the spoken language, because of the variability of the technicians who transcribe the text in Parliament (Giuliano, 2015; Piemontese & Villani, 2007; Treimane, 2011; Villani, 2006, 2015).

Aims

For this research, gender differences in the use of language were studied through the analysis of two pairs of parliamentarians belonging to the parties of the Radicals –Emma Bonino and Marco Pannella– and of Center-Left –Rosy Bindi and Walter Veltroni. The speeches of the first two parliamentarians were delivered mainly during the First Republic (1976-1993), whereas those of the other pair were made mainly in the Second Republic² (1994-2009). In this way the context is explored over a period of more than thirty years characterized by major transformations and innovations, not only in the Parliamentary system (including an increased female presence in the Parliament), but in the very way of understanding the field of politics as it became more and more personalized and mediatized (Sensales, 2008). We will explore how language acts as a powerful tool, building specific social representations of men and women MPs linked to gender roles oriented in stereotypical or counter-stereotypical directions. Considering the findings of Basile (2010), we provide that there are differences in levels of agency, and in ingroup/outgroup dynamics, in men versus women MPs. Moreover, regardless of gender, we assume a more general positive valence for “We-Us,” and a more

² In the First Republic, the electoral system was proportional and centered on the role of political parties. In the Second Republic it moved to the majority system, with a centrality of leaders and media.

general negative valence for the “You.” Having an anti-essentialist perspective, we then have, as a possible source of variation in linguistic behavior observed, the different political and cultural periods during which the parliamentary speeches were made. In other words, we assume that the processes under study are context-sensitive, providing that the differentiations in agency level and in ingroup/outgroup dynamics can become more nuanced corresponding to the increased presence of women in Parliament and of the evolution of Italian society towards less discrimination against women. A sub-hypotheses, not linked to gender differences but rather to the role of political orientation, provides that the dynamics of ingroup/outgroup differentiation are far more pronounced in the two Radical politicians than in the two members of the Center-Left, because of the greater extremist minoritarian tradition of Radicals, especially at a rhetorical discursive level. Finally, we also analyzed the ingroup characteristics, detecting the categorical amplitude of the “We-Us” through its context of use, referring to a specific dimension—a political party or government—or superordinate dimension—parliamentarians, Italians, women, etc.—with respect to it. In this way, we tried to highlight the use of strategies which, focusing on the ingroup’s own inclusive features and values, make the “We” prototypical of a larger and more inclusive group, in order to extend rhetorically the area of consent, or to express its minoritarian status through the circumscribed and self-centered use of “We” (cf. Serino & Pugliese, 2006). At the methodological level, we have pursued our objectives through two different types of analysis: a quantitative one, based on a lexicographical investigation on the corpus of parliamentary speeches of four politicians, and a qualitative one, based on the context in which the pronominal markers are used in the speeches of each politician.

Methodology

Material under analysis

The analysis included 411 parliamentary speeches delivered between 1976 and 2009 by four parliamentarians. They have been extracted from the reports available on the website of the Chamber of Deputies (Lower Chamber) in html documents. Our corpus under study is part of a larger one, composed of thirty corpora of speeches delivered to the Chamber of Deputies by thirty MPs selected because of their role as leaders in a period covering all legislatures of the Italian Republic from the first to the sixteenth. They were compiled for a project in which researchers of diverse disciplinary fields—linguists, statisticians, sociologists, and social psychologists—worked together. The original corpus contained the speeches of only two female leaders whom we chose for our study. We added a male counterpart for each, selecting a pair of Radical deputies and a pair of deputies of the Center-Left. If, on the one hand, there existed the advantage of having a ready corpus for the textual analysis, on the other hand there was the disadvantage of having to work with corpora not balanced between the two pairs and with respect to the two main periods (First and Second Republic), with the two Radicals MPs present almost exclusively in the first period and the two Center-Left MPs in the second.

Table 1 shows the frequency of speeches by politicians and by periods. As can be seen, their distribution is unbalanced: in fact, the Radical pair, Emma Bonino and Marco Pannella, gave many more speeches than the pair from the Center-Left, Rosy Bindi and Walter Veltroni. Furthermore, the speeches of the Radicals are almost all concentrated in the First Republic, while those of the two Center-Left politicians were almost all delivered during the Second Republic.

Table 1. Frequencies of parliamentary speeches for each politician in the two periods

Parliamentarians	First Republic (1976-1993)	Second Republic (1994-2009)
Rosy Bindi	0	39
Walter Veltroni	4	20
Emma Bonino	136	5
Marco Pannella	205	2
Total	345	66

Operational pathway

We imported the parliamentary speeches as a textual file. We then built an extra textual file composed by numerically coding specific characteristics such as the name of the leader, the year/period of the speech, and whether the politician belonged to the government or to the opposition party at the time of the speech. Alongside this, we have done a qualitative analysis, based on the context of use of specific pronominal markers, in order to highlight the categorical amplitude of the *Noi* (“We”) (specific or superordinate) and the valence (negative, neutral, or positive) of *Noi* (“We”) versus *Voi* (“You,” second person plural). Following are some examples of the specific and superordinate “We,” and of valence for “We” and “You,” found in the speeches of Pannella and Bonino and of Veltroni and Bindi.

For the “superordinate We” (Italians, Italy)

Pannella: “Noi lo faremmo, e poi, invece dei militari turchi, noi, gli onesti e i tecnici italiani, restituiremmo il potere di nuovo a voi, partiti.” [We would do it, and then, instead of to the Turkish military, we, the honest and technical Italians, would return the power back to you, the political parties.]

Bonino: “Dal momento che il nostro paese è circondato da centrali nucleari tanto vale costruirle anche noi.” [Since our country is surrounded by nuclear power stations, we might as well build them too.]

Veltroni: “Si vendono più quotidiani in Belgio che da noi, se ne vendono ogni mille abitanti, 351 in Austria, 580 in Giappone.” [They sell more newspapers in Belgium than us, 351 in Austria, 580 in Japan (per thousand inhabitants).]

Bindi: “Perchè noi siamo e vogliamo restare una democrazia parlamentare.” [Because we are, and want to remain a parliamentary democracy.]

For the “specific We” (political party)

Pannella: “Quando noi facemmo la battaglia da soli, nel 1977, contro il piano energetico delle trenta centrali nucleari; quando noi—da soli!—lottammo perché la Camera non votasse alcune decisioni, e in modo particolare per questo problema enorme, per il decollo o l’uscita del nostro paese dalla crisi, dal punto di vista industriale, e via dicendo; quando noi fummo battuti, l’unanimità della Camera, a parte noi, votò quel piano energetico nucleare.” [When we fought the battle alone, in 1977, against the energy plan for the thirty nuclear power plants; when we—alone!—fought because the House would not enact legislation, and especially for this huge problem, for the take-off or exit of our country from the crisis, from the industrial point of view, and so on; when we were beaten, the unanimity of the Chamber, apart from us, voted for the nuclear energy plan.]

Bonino: “Noi riteniamo che sia un diritto civile quello di poter scegliere o disgiungere tra sessualità e procreazione.” [We believe it is a civil right to be able to choose whether to separate sexuality from procreation.]

Veltroni: “Noi voteremo contro l’emendamento del Governo, nonostante si sia riusciti a strappare qualche risultato con il lavoro svolto prima in sede di Comitato dei nove e quindi in quest’aula.” [We will vote against the amendment of the Government, although it has managed to snatch some results with the prior work done in the Committee of the nine and then in this Chamber.]

Bindi: “Tuttavia sono sicuramente sfuggite al ministro le ragioni profonde per le quali noi popolari abbiamo presentato l’interpellanza.” [However the profound reasons for which we the “populists” (the party of the former Christian Democrats) have presented the interpellation, they are definitely misunderstood by the minister.]

For the valence, the “positive We”

Pannella: “Guarda che gli operai della FIAT sui referendum sul finanziamento pubblico dei partiti e sulla legge Reale non hanno votato in modo fascista come te, hanno votato come noi!”

[Look at how the workers of FIAT did not vote in the fascist manner, as you did, on the referendum on the public financing of political parties and on the Reale Law, they have voted with us.]

Bonino: “Noi abbiamo responsabilmente deciso di correre oggi il rischio e di darvi il nostro consenso.” [We have responsibly decided today to run the risk and give you our consent.]

Veltroni: “Ribadisco che quella da noi proposta mi sembra una soluzione coerente per lo meno con l’ispirazione, le intenzioni, le ragioni generali che stanno alla base di questa legge.” [I repeat that it seems to me that we, at least, propose a coherent solution with inspiration, purpose, the general reasons that are the basis of this law.]

Bindi: “Noi siamo stati e siamo una grande, singolare ed originale presenza politica.” [We have been and are a great, unique, and original political presence.]

For the “negative We”

Pannella: “Forse i compagni comunisti di democrazia proletaria e del PDUP in Europa e dappertutto raccontano che noi siamo i «craxisti striscianti», i «servitor vostri», signor presidente del Consiglio.” [Perhaps the communist comrades of proletarian democracy and PDUP in Europe and all over the world tell us that we are the “creeping Craxist” (from the Italian socialist Craxi), “your servants,” Mr. Prime Minister.]

Bonino: “Noi semplicemente siamo il fanalino di coda di questa politica, senza avere una iniziativa nostra che dia dignità diversa a valori di vita, che tutti diciamo di voler perseguire.” [We are simply bringing up the rear of this policy, without having our initiative that gives different degrees of dignity to life values, which we all say we want to pursue.]

Veltroni: “Noi conducemmo una battaglia aspra, ma in quell’occasione si consumò una doppia sconfitta, perché non solo fu persa una battaglia contro il formarsi dei trust ma fu sconfitta l’idea che la politica potesse decidere, potesse assumere autonomamente scelte fondamentali in un comparto decisivo della vita del paese.” [We conducted a fierce battle, but this time it met with a double defeat, because not only was a battle lost against the formation of trusts, but the idea was also lost that politics could decide, could take independently fundamental choices in a decisive sector of the life of the country.]

Bindi: “Noi non siamo stati capaci di fare questo, siamo apparsi la solita sinistra.” [We have not been able to do this, we appeared to be the traditional left-wing.]

For the “negative You”

Pannella: “Noi riteniamo che voi siate colpevoli, come le opposizioni pseudo neutraliste, pseudopacifiste, che in questo momento non a caso dilagano grazie ai mass-media nel nostro paese.” [We believe that you are guilty, as the pseudo-neutralist and pseudo-pacifistic oppositions, which at this time, not by chance, are overflowing in our country thanks to the mass media.]

Bonino: “Certo, di fronte a questi episodi di terrorismo voi avete voluto reagire, a nostro avviso, in modo superficiale e demagogico ripristinando in realtà (neanche innovando!) delle norme, quali il fermo di polizia, le intercettazioni telefoniche senza autorizzazione del magistrato.” [Of course, in the face of these terrorist incidents you have wanted to react, in our opinion, in a superficial and demagogic way in reality restoring (not even innovating!) some rules, such as police detention, telephone surveillance without authorization of the magistrate.]

Veltroni: “Voi vi siete accaniti nei vari tentativi di manovra contro chi paga le tasse, ma lo scandalo di questo Paese è che solo il 2 per cento dichiara più di 74 mila euro.” [You have been tenacious in your various attempts to maneuver against the taxpayers, but the scandal of this country is that only 2 percent declare more than 74,000 euros.]

Bindi: “Voi avete lucrato un premio di maggioranza su una maggioranza che non c’è più.” [You have injustly profited by a political process for a majority that no longer exists.]

For this qualitative analysis, two independent judges controlled the context of use of pronominal forms with the attribution in the modalities previewed. In case of discrepancy a third judge decided the final attribution.

Statistical elaborations

The two files, textual and extra-textual, were treated with different steps of the statistical packages, TaLTaC2 (Bolasco, 2010) and Tree Tagger ([http://www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/~schmid/tools/TreeTagger /](http://www.cis.uni-muenchen.de/~schmid/tools/TreeTagger/)). The two programs provided information about the frequency of the different indicators (personal pronouns and verbs). Because of big differences in word-total frequency between the four politicians (see Table 2), we calculated the average of words for each MPs, relating the occurrences of each MPs to the number of speeches. For the same reason, the comparison of the use of the pronouns and conditional verbs by men and women, and by the two pairs, was conducted by calculating the proportion of the specific pronoun or verb in relation to the occurrences of all pronouns or verbal forms grouped by gender, or by political orientation. To verify the hypothesis about differences of proportions between the two groups (M/W, or Radical/Center-left), or between the different pronominal forms in the same politician, the χ -test was used. For qualitative data, related to the amplitude of “We/Us” and valence of “We” versus “You,” no statistical tests were applied because of data distribution.

Results

Table 2. illustrates the trends relating to the words present in the speeches of the four parliamentarians. Occurrences present in the entire corpus amounted to 971.111. Generally the number of occurrences of words, also the lowest, ensures stable results to our analysis. Concerning the averages of occurrences, parliamentary speeches in the First Republic (Bonino and Pannella) were longer than those made in the Second Republic (Bindi and Veltroni). Grouping the data by gender, the men have higher averages than women.

Table 2. Words occurrences and average for each parliamentarian

Parliamentarians	Number of speeches	Occurrences	Averages
Rosy Bindi	39	55.048	1411
Walter Veltroni	24	41.475	1728
Emma Bonino	141	307.237	2179
Marco Pannella	207	567.351	2741
Total	411	971.111	2363

Agentic pronouns

The trends of the first indicator of agency, related to the use of pronouns in the first person singular and plural for each politician, show that our hypothesis of a greater use of the first person singular by female MPs than their male colleagues is not confirmed, because there are no gender differences in the use of the first person singular ($\chi = 0,05$, $p > 0,05$ for the comparison of Veltroni and Bindi; $\chi = 0,86$, $p > 0,05$ for the comparison of Pannella and Bonino). There are also no differences in the use of the first person plural between Veltroni and Bindi ($\chi = 0,70$, $p > 0,05$), whereas for Pannella and Bonino the differences are significant ($\chi = 4,50$, $p < 0,001$), with Pannella using the first person plural more than Bonino (the proportion is of 0,27 versus 0,18). Moreover, all four politicians use the first person plural more than the first person singular, though for Bindi this trend is not significant ($\chi = 8,95$, $p < 0,001$ for Pannella; $\chi = 5,00$, $p < 0,001$ for Bonino; $\chi = 1,97$, $p < 0,05$ for Veltroni; $\chi = 1,60$, $p > 0,05$ for Bindi).

The use of the modal conditional verbs

The conditional verbs represent 3% of all verbal forms. The trends relating to this modal

verb, used as an indicator of low agency, show no significant differences between the four parliamentarians ($\chi = 0,62, p > 0,05$, for the comparison of Pannella and Bonino; $\chi = 0,47, p > 0,05$, for the comparison of Veltroni and Bindi).

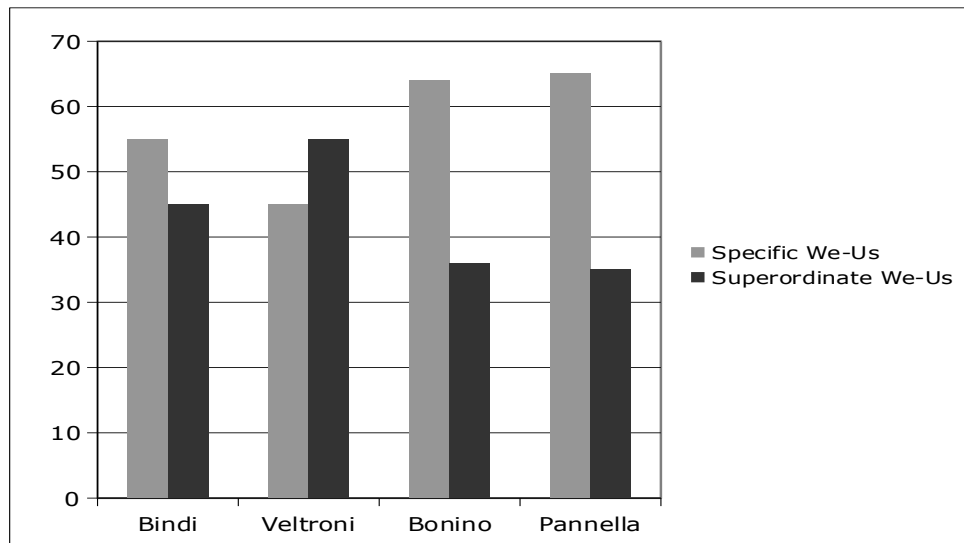
Ingroup/ outgroup differentiation

The trends of ingroup/outgroup differentiation through the detection of the use of pronouns in the first and second person plural in male versus female show gender differences ($\chi = 6,87, p < 0,001$), with the male more conflictive than the female (the proportion is of 0,34 versus 0,23). In this case, our hypothesis of a greater presence of these opposite dynamics (ingroup *versus* outgroup) in male leaders than in their female colleagues was confirmed. But if we decompose the data for the two dyads, we have a significant difference only with respect to the dyad Pannella/Bonino ($\chi = 7,06, p < 0,001$), while among Veltroni/Bindi the differences are not significant ($\chi = 0,185, p > 0,05$). The results for Pannella show a more conflictive style (proportion = 0,35) than for Bonino (proportion = 0,23). Those findings confirm the sub-hypotheses of a greater presence of these dynamics for Radicals, compared with the two parliamentarians of the Center-Left.

Amplitude of ingroup reference for each of the four parliamentarians

Figure 1 presents the categorical amplitude of “We-Us.” Its detection showed an interesting difference. Only Veltroni uses “We-Us” in a context in which the superordinate amplitude prevails with respect to its political part, while for the other three MPs the context refers to a greater extent to their political part and only secondarily to a superordinate “We-Us.” In all cases the enlarged inclusiveness of “We-Us” refers primarily to the parliamentarians, and secondly to Italy, to the Italians, and to democracy in general.

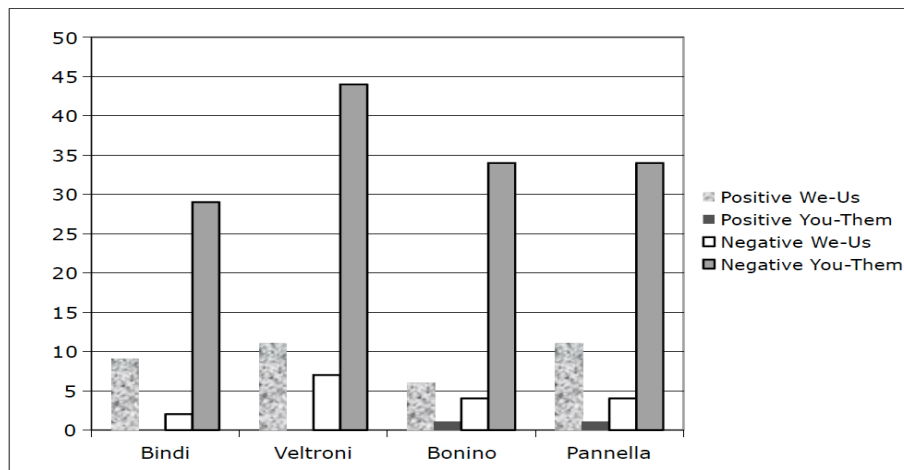
Figure 1. Frequency in percent of the categorical amplitude, of either the specific or the superordinate “We-Us”, by four parliamentarians.



Ingroup/ outgroup valence shown by four politicians

Figure 2 illustrates the trends relating to the ingroup and outgroup valence. As expected, the results show a greater positive valence for the ingroup (We) and a greater negative valence for the outgroup (You), confirming the predictions of the model.

Figure 2. Frequency in percent of either positive or negative valence attributed to “We-Us”/“You”, by four parliamentarians (the neutral valence is not present in the figure).



Conclusions

Overall, the results have shown the effectiveness of our heuristic choice in favoring a comparative anti-essentialist point of view, through which we have detected linguistic dynamics in the parliamentary speeches of the four politicians —Emma Bonino, Marco Pannella, Rosy Bindi, and Walter Veltroni— that sometimes reproduce traditional gender distinctions, and sometimes go beyond them, as stated by Freed (2003). At the same time our methodological choice to do quantitative and qualitative analyses was particularly fruitful. Indeed, only in some cases are the parliamentary speeches marked by gender differences reflecting, crystallizing, and reproducing stereotypes and asymmetries between men and women. In other cases, such trends seem to be reversed, especially as time goes by, according to the progress of women’s emancipation that results in a tendency in attenuation of gender stereotypes in society that is attested, confirmed, and stimulated by language. In this way, the linguistic behaviors displayed by MPs contribute to building social representations of politicians themselves, marked or unmarked by gender stereotypes that interact with other cultural dimensions following an “intersectionality” pathway (Wodak, 2015).

Thus, for all parliamentarians, there were no differences in the use of conditional verbal modes, the 3% of all verbal forms. This result disproves the hypothesis of a more frequent use of this form by women as a signal of their low sense of agency. Always concerning all MPs, our findings showed a higher use of the “We” pronominal form than the “I,” confirming the cohesive, contrastive, and agentic role of the “We” as the most used in the parliamentary field (Bazzanella, 2002, 2009a and b, 2014; Bijeikienė & Utkā, 2006; Formato, 2014; Sensales & Areni, 2015; Sensales, Giuliano, & Areni, 2016; van Dijk, 2000).

Finally, our findings about the number of speeches and their average length from the four MPs show different trends. In the first case we have gender differences in the direction affirmed by the literature (e.g. Bäck, Debus, & Müller, 2014; Bock & Lenard, 2016), with a higher number of speeches delivered by the male Radical MP than by his female colleague, but also in the opposite direction with a reversed counter-stereotypical trend for the pair Veltroni and Bindi, with Rosy Bindi’s number of speeches higher than the Veltroni ones. While for the average length is confirmed, as highlighted by applied research in different professional and social contexts (cf. Carli, 2006; Kendall & Tannen, 1997; Eakins & Eakins, 1978), a general tendency of men to talk more than women, regardless of the historical and cultural context, and therefore also irrespective of the feminine representation in the institution. In this regard reference may be made to the need to reach a “critical mass” of female MPs that can affect power relations, all still in favor of men, despite some growth of the number of women in Parliament (Childs & Krook, 2008, 2009). Our findings of male

politicians speaking more than the female politicians seem to confirm the stereotypical view that men feel more comfortable in public speaking.

Concerning the comparison between the two pairs, the linguistic behavior of the two Radical politicians, delivered almost exclusively during the First Republic, was more in line with our expectations, both with respect to gender differences, with Bonino less agentive (making less use of the first person plural) and conflictive than Pannella, and in relation to the oratory characterization of the Radicals, who were more oriented to emphasize conflictual aspects, than their Center-Left colleagues. We noticed different trends for the Bindi/Veltroni pair, whose speeches were made almost exclusively in the Second Republic. In all cases under observation, there were no gender differences in their linguistic behavior. Particularly for Rosy Bindi, the findings about the use of the conditional verbs, not different from Veltroni's use, do not reflect the trends highlighted by Basile (2010) in her analysis of interviews of men and women politicians to the Italian press in 2009. In that study Basile found a lower level of agency in the women politicians in respect to their male colleagues, with more conditional verbal forms and minor use of "We" pronominal form by the women. This trend also persists in another survey, by Sensales and Areni (2017), about representations of men and women ministers of the Renzi government in 2014 in which the phrases quoted in the headlines showed the man using the pronoun "We" more than the women. These differences related to the different contexts—parliamentarian and mediatic—drive us to interrogate the relationship between the two realities: the institutional one, more elitarian, in which gender stereotypes can be overlooked in spite of the androcentric environment, and the mass-medial one, more popular-based, in which gender stereotypes are rooted. In these two different realities the parliamentarians seem to be operating in contrasting linguistic ways, modulating their speeches differently.

For ingroup/outgroup differentiation, Rosy Bindi is counter-stereotypically more oriented towards the dynamics of differentiation between groups, by definition most conflictive, only in the qualitative findings. In fact the analysis of the context of the use of "We-Us" shows for Bindi the increased use of a categorization less inclusive and more confined to its political party; however, this categorization is also shared by the two Radical leaders, in this case because of their confrontational and minoritarian position. Conversely, Veltroni is the only one to use the superordinate "We-Us" more, as a rhetoric strategy to increase political consensus and to enlarge the hegemonic base. Such rhetorical strategy is consistent with his political action, as in 2007 when he became one of the founders of the Democratic Party and launched the election slogan "a party that speaks to all Italians." Finally, for all four politicians the exploration of positive or negative ingroup valence, compared to the outgroup valence, confirmed the hypothesis of a higher positive value attribution to "We-Us" and a negative value attribution to "You" (see Sendén et al., 2013; van Dijk, 2000), according to the social-psychological dynamic that tries to valorize and preserve the ingroup's own identity while discrediting others.

A final consideration concerns the higher values for the use of the first person plural, as opposed to the first person singular, from all four leaders. This result can be interpreted in the light of what was stated by Kacewicz et al. (2013) about the increased use of this pronominal form by persons with higher status, by virtue of their being psychologically more focused on others, rather than reductively turned in upon themselves. In the speeches of the four politicians, this attentional trend, more centered on others, finds its enhancement in consideration of the fact that an activity such as the parliamentary one is, by definition, targeted towards the achievement of the common good.

Overall the study has limitations, in part already mentioned, and not always solvable as the investigation continues. The first is the inability to control the accuracy of the written transcripts of the parliamentary speeches after they have been orally delivered. A second aspect relates to the imbalance of the speeches, both for gender and, above all, between the First and Second Republic. It should also be noted that, in our survey, there is no comparison with a pair of Center-Right politicians. Finally, it should be stressed that the results related to the Center-Left pair could also be due, or be caused by, the different ideological and cultural provenance of the two leaders, with the background of Rosy Bindi being anchored to DC (the old Center/Center-Right party), while that of Walter Veltroni is rooted in PCI (the old Left party).

The limitations just outlined call for us to extending the study to other parliamentary speeches of female/male politicians, of the Center-Left and Center-Right. In that latter case, considering the different degrees of agency highlighted by specific surveys on Italian parliamentarians with different political orientations (Francescato, Mebane, Sorace, Giacomantonio, & Lauriola, 2008)), we can expect the language of the parliamentarians to reflect those differences. We will also pay particular attention to balanced coverage between the two periods in order to confirm trends, so far only a matter of conjecture, in reference to the role of the different historical and cultural context.

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