

FEATURES OF EXPRESSIVE FEMALE SPEECH IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF SPAIN AND LATIN AMERICA

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This paper represents a multimodal analysis of the paraverbal (prosodic and gesture) features of expressive female political speech in Latin America and Spain. The language corpus consisted of public speeches delivered by Spanish-speaking female politicians Eva Peron, Christina de Kirchner and Manuela Carmena. The article includes an overview of theoretical approaches to female speech studies and follows current trends in modern sociolinguistics, which, on the one hand, accumulate the classical techniques (particularly, experimental methods) of studying the gender-related specifics of the oral female speech based on social standing, age and professional affiliation, and, on the other hand, reflect the latest approaches to the contrastive analysis of socio-political discourse in the "Spanish-Speaking World" (Spain and Latin America). This contributes to the study of gender, speech effect and comparative issues. We offer an audiovisual analysis method for studying voice and kinetic means of the expressive speech of female politicians in Spain and Latin America. This allows determining the ethno-specific correlates of expressiveness in a speech of female politicians at the verbal and paraverbal levels and building an updated model of female political expressiveness based on the integrity of its verbal and paraverbal categories.

Keywords: contrastive analysis; gender; political discourse; expressive female speech; verbal; paraverbal; prosodic; gesture; Latin America; Spain.

1. Introduction

This study follows current trends in modern sociolinguistics, which, on the one hand, accumulate the classical techniques (particularly, experimental methods) of studying the gender-related specifics of oral female speech based on social standing, age and professional affiliation, and, on the other hand, reflect the latest approaches to the contrastive analysis of socio-political discourse in the "Spanish-speaking world" (Spain and Latin America). This contributes to the study of gender (Anderson, 2019), speech effect (Ger. *Sprechwirkungsforschung*) (Sendlmeier, 2016) and comparative issues (Hock, 2009; Kayne, 2010).

We offer a novel audiovisual analysis method for studying voice and kinetic means used in the *expressive speech of female politicians* in Spain and Latin America. This allows determining the ethno-specific correlates of expressiveness in the speech of female politicians at the verbal and paraverbal levels and improving the integral 'verbal + tone + gesture' model of aggressive rhetoric (Petlyuchenko, 2009a, p. 184; Petlyuchenko & Artiukhova, 2015, p. 192).

2. Background and motivations

The concept of "gender" is studied in anthropology (Malo, 2018), sociology (Weißmann, 2017), psychology (Cheshire, 2002), history (Lower, 2016), literature (Hanisch, 2005) and other humanities, and is used to distinguish "masculinity" and "femininity" as the sociocultural characteristics of the natural differences between a man and a woman.

In *linguistics*, gender is understood as *social gender* and is interpreted first and foremost in relation to the social status of the speaker (Trudgill, 2000; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2001; Eckert, 2004), which is one of the main factors of linguistic variation and the most important component that should be taken into account in studying the phonetic organisation of verbal male and female speech (Potapov, 2002), the stereotypes of its perception in various linguistic cultures (Petlyuchenko, 2009b; Mouton, 2000; Levin & Sullivan, 1995), and the formation of speech portraits of women and men in different types of discourse (Fedoriv, 2012; Bethany, 2003).

To various extents, verbal differentiation in terms of the speaker's gender is observed in many world languages depending on the specific social and cultural traditions of the society, in which a certain language is used. It is also characterised by the use of refined vocabulary, short utterances, disjunctive question, and conversation intensifiers (Potapov, 2004). The extralinguistic markers of the female group are cooperation and hyper-correctness of pronunciation. Furthermore, in contrast to male speech, the speech of Russian-

speaking women tends to use “prestigious vocabulary”, neologisms, modal words, concentrated associations (Schinnerl, 2015).

Traditionally, female speech in various societies and linguistic cultures is more emotionally highlighted than male speech (Bonzi, 2014; Grigorash, 2012; Parsons, 2009; Pepiot, 2014). Women make extensive use of intonation to express such endocrine-based emotions as joy, anger, fear, etc. that have a pronounced expressive nature in certain southern ethnic cultures such as Greek, Italian, Latin American, etc. (Längle & Holzhey-Kunz, 2007; Schonlau, 2017, p. 268).

Phonatory features of female speech are typological and can be manifested in various linguistic cultures in *vocalism* (women have a special timbre colouring caused by a greater volume of the oral cavity during the articulation of sounds as compared to men), *consonantism* (there is more stress during articulation as compared to men), *prosody* (extensive use of various means of intonational expressiveness) (Kehrein, 2002), as well as such acoustic effects as aspiration, labialisation and nasalisation that convey various shades of a woman’s emotional state, her attitude to the subject matter of her utterance, to the interlocutor, the speech situation, etc. (Elemeshina, 2010). *Perceptively*, the female voice is generally perceived as higher than the male voice, which can be explained by purely physiological peculiarities of the vocal cords that are generally longer and thicker in men than in women, and the shorter female vocal tract (Pompino-Marschall, 2009, p. 35).

A key feature of the modern political discourse is that both men and women are its equal participants (Alexiyevets, 2017). The established gender-related differences in this area allow distinguishing female political discourse (Bethany, 2003; Burns, 2013), which is characterised by the use of a vocabulary with reality perception semantics at the level of feelings and emotions thus proving their widespread tendency to speak about their feelings and not hide them (Maravall, 2015). Female politicians often use emotionally evaluative vocabulary, cries, words denoting doubt, uncertainty, probability, inaccuracy, a wide range of stylistically marked phrases – metaphors, epithets, lexical repetitions, oppositions, which are associated with the intentions of female politicians to inform the reader/listener about national and world events in an expressive form and characterise their political opponents more emotionally (Coates, 2013).

The motivation and emotional state of Latin American women who are active in the political arena and usually project an “iron lady” image (such as Eva Peron, Michelle Bachelet, Lidia Gueiler Tejada, Rosalía Arteaga Serrano, Ertha Pascal-Trouillo) is most adequately conveyed by such paraverbal speech components such as gestures, pauses, glances, silence, etc., as well as the constructed components of their image (clothing, appearance, gait, bad habits, health status, temperament, family attitude, etc.) (Kalyta, 2014).

The younger generation of female politicians is more relaxed with greater freedom of expression and rhetorical skills, whereas female leaders of the older generations show features of a speaker strictly regulated by outside prescriptions, which was characteristic of the Soviet socio-political era (Fedoriv, 2012).

The correct interpretation of the ethno-specific features of female speech in various forms of communication, particularly in political discourse, requires consideration of the *kinetic specifics* of the co-speech gestures that are included in the verbal message and are usually synchronised with the prominent sections of the message for visual highlighting purposes (Kendon, 2004).

Speaking of kinetic peculiarities of the Spanish-speaking linguistic community, we note that gestures and facial expressions of both women and men are characterised by intensified expressiveness caused by the traditional high emotionality and southern temperament displayed by the inhabitants of this region (Hein-Kircher, 2013). We should also consider the possible impact of the national-cultural code of Italian immigrants to Latin America who currently form the fourth largest ethnic group in Brazil, and still retain their Italian identity and ties with Italian culture (Chaunu, 1973). The typified kinetic portrait of representatives of Spanish-speaking linguistic cultures is formed by the following kinemes: (1) a gesture in which a person seems to hold a bundle of something in his hand denotes “a lot of people, a crowd”, (2) a gesture in which a person brings his index fingers apart or together or knocks them one on the one is understood as “being together”; 3) a gesture in which the palms are directed towards the interlocutor means “be calmer, calm down” for Spaniards, etc. (Firsova, 2000).

3. Subjects, Methods and Materials

3.1. Methods and programme

This paper studies female political discourse in Spanish-speaking countries with a focus on contrastive lingual, prosodic and kinetic means of expressing female speech in the political discourse of Spain and Latin America against the background of the common feature of “expressiveness”. Contrastive analysis of Spanish and Latin American female political discourse required a common comparison platform – *tertium comparationis* based on the category of expressiveness, which is consistent with the communicative intentions of female politicians who are expressive (emotional) leaders and always try to communicate

expressively in public oral discourse. Expressiveness is understood as an enhancement (or reduction) of the extent of a certain attribute, which leads to its more intense, brighter, more dynamic expression in language or speech. Expressiveness is not related to a specific communicative act; its lexical and syntactic “carriers” can be language structures that are absolutely heterogeneous in terms of semantics or language functions. Thus, the choice of levels of the *tertium comparationis* constructed for the contrastive comparison of Spanish and Latin American female political discourse correlates with the subject matter of the analysis and is formed by two levels of comparison: *the verbal level* (comparing utterances/phrases of female politicians containing verbal markers of gender-related feminine expressiveness); and *the paralingual level* (comparing the prosodic and kinetic characteristics of female political speech in two not closely related languages) (Chernyakova, 2014).

In general, the study was carried out using linguistic, computational and comparative analysis. Audiovisual analysis of public speeches delivered by contemporary female politicians in Spain and Latin America included perceptual evaluation in terms of expressiveness, individual peculiarities of each woman, as well as a visual analysis of the co-speech gestures included in the expressive sections of their public appeals. The raters included: (1) Ukrainian-speaking faculty members specialising in Spanish philology with experience in perceptual evaluation, 2) Spanish-speaking humanities students studying in Ukraine, as well as students from different universities in Spain and Latin America, whose native language is Spanish (22 participants).

3.2. Corpus

The study involved a general corpus consisting of the political speeches by Spanish-speaking female politicians (Eva Peron, Christina de Kirchner, Ana María Botella Serrano, Esther Vivas, Josefina Vázquez Mota, Manuela Carmena – 247 minutes).

3.3. Data Analysis

The *computational* analysis involved a narrow corpus of audio and video recordings of political speeches (60 minutes), from which we extracted audio and video clips containing phrasal units or utterances that were identified by the perceptive analysis listeners as “female expressive microcontexts.” The resulting files were then processed using PRAAT 5.04.43 (90 units) revealing 312 co-speech gesture units. When selecting audio and video recordings, we also determined the quality of the recording itself, especially in the case of recordings of Evita Peron’s rally speeches, which usually contain additional reactions of enthusiastic crowds, chanting, shouting and require additional processing before acoustic analysis.

Using PRAAT 5.04.43 we performed a periodicity analysis of waveform, pitch and intensity parameters building text grid annotations consisting of three tiers ((1) phrase, (2) phonetic word/tone-group and (3) gesture) and saved the results in a drawing object. The resulting data were stored as a consolidated spreadsheet for further statistical processing using the Statistica 8.0. Such complex parameters as the speech tempo, pause coefficient and mean pause duration of expressive phrases were also included. Frame-by-frame processing of co-speech gestures was performed using Sound Forge 9.0.

The developed computation research programme aims to identify the following types of differences in the organisation of female political discourse in Spanish and Latin American linguistic cultures: (1) linguistic factors of the Spanish language itself, which are manifested in verbal structures, (2) extralinguistic factors (gender-related, social, emotional, ethno-specific, etc.), which are more evident at the paraverbal level and have a greater number of interlevel differences.

3.4. Hypothesis

We assume that the verbal and paraverbal (phonetic and kinetic) features of female speech are of typological nature and depend on the linguistic culture (in our case, Spanish and Latin American), but due to significant persuasive characteristics of political discourse, these typological attributes of female speech can be preserved partially or eliminated completely. It is likely that the preservation of ethno-specific features or their loss will depend on the degree of political tradition in each linguistic culture, as well as the individual oratorical style of each female politician.

4. Results

4.1. Conceptual correlates of female expressiveness in Spanish vs Latin American political discourse

The analysis of conceptual correlates of female expressiveness in Spanish and Latin American political discourse revealed the prevalence of male concepts forming the conceptual field of “political struggle”: (1) homeland (35.9%); (2) strife (27.9%); (3) enemy (17.9%); (4) success (13.6%); (5) force (8.9%); (6) energy (2.9%), (7) courage (2.9%). At the same time, we note that such concepts as *equality, female labour,*

rape, etc. that are related to the conceptual field of “emancipation” and are important conceptual reference points for Latin American female politicians, are not used by Spanish female politicians neither in the strict sense nor as a metaphor. This can be explained by the actual equality of male and female rights in modern European society.

4.2. Verbal correlates of female expressiveness in Spanish vs Latin American Political Discourse

The contrastive analysis allowed concluding that there are a number of common and specific verbal features in the female political speech of Spain and Latin America. Spanish, Latin American women are equally active in using hyperbolisers, or intensifiers of feelings, epithets, metaphors, and comparisons. Spanish female politicians use harsh language quite rarely, for example, “Me avergoncé y no pude contestar, tuve que cerrar la boca / I was ashamed and I could not answer, I had to shut up” (Carmena, 2015).

Full analogies of female expressiveness in the political discourse of Spain and Latin America can be traced at the syntactic level in the use of *repetitions* (“*Me olvidaba también de muchos radicales que se han incorporado también, me olvidaba también injustamente de muchos radicales que se han incorporado sin perder su identidad / I have also forgotten many radicals who have also joined, I have also unjustly forgotten many radicals who have joined without losing their identity*) (Kirchner, 2015)) and *rhetorical questions*, (“¿Quiénes de aquí son casadas? / Which of you is married?”; “¿Como pueden demostrar nuestro gran valor? / How can we show our courage?” (Peron, 1951), which belong to rhetorical strategies in terms of their function and are responsible for effective influence on the addressee in oral political discourse.

Public political speeches by Latin American female politicians are also rich in epithets, such as *enorme responsabilidad* / great responsibility, *el profundo amor* / deepest love, *enorme emoción* / great emotion (Peron, 1951), “*con limpia sonrisa, con la mirada llena de brillo* / with a clean smile, with a look full of brightness” (about J.D. Peron) (Peron, 1951), “...*fuertes e imborrables recuerdos* / strong and indelible memories” (Kirchner, 2015), which usually convey hyperbolic, intense feelings. At the same time, Latin American women, particularly Evita Peron, make extensive use of comparisons with nature, the world around them, animals (for example: “*enemigos, acechando como buitres desde la altura o como víboras pegajosas* / enemies, lurking like vultures from height or like sticky vipers” (Peron, 1951), “*él como los cóndores volaba alto y solo* / he flew high and alone as a condor” (Peron, 1951).

4.3. Prosodic correlates of female expressiveness in Spanish vs Latin American political discourse

Periodicity analysis allows concluding that there are a number of contrasting features in the prosodic organisation of female political discourse in Spain and Latin America. For instance, Spanish female politicians are characterised by more intense tonal and dynamic highlighting of the most important “feminine” concepts (family, homemakers’ rights, strong female work ethic) using impulsive gestures of the right and left hands with the configuration of the hand in the form of an open palm with an index finger. The prosodic characteristics of the speech of Spanish-speaking female politicians include contrasting attributes associated with the parameters of sonority (noise) and tonal variations (monotony), which are perceived positively, as well as the timbre voice parameter of hoarseness, which is perceived negatively. The contrasting prosodic attributes of Latin American female political speech are high expressiveness reflected in the acceleration of speech periods, pitch variations in the final part of the utterance, transitions to a loud sharp voice phonation.

4.4. Kinetic correlates of female expressiveness in Spanish vs Latin American political discourse

Kinetic correlates of female speech in the political discourse of Spain and Latin America are also characterised by a number of contrasting features, which are determined, above all, by the individual oratorical style of each female politician. Latin Americans (Christina de Kirchner), for example, use multiple gestures of one or both hands with a wide span, straight arm pointing index finger towards the audience, “pinch” gesture, fist with index finger, as well as head nodes and inclinations of the whole body towards the audience to reinforce verbal expression and underline the “feminine” concepts (family, homemakers’ rights, strong female work ethic).

For instance, an effective expressive highlighting technique is Christine Kirchner’s use of a short stop before the semantically loaded section of her answer to a question that she herself asks, e.g., “*va a pasar lo que ustedes quieren [328 ms] que pase!* / only what you want [328 ms] will happen!” followed by a storm of applause. Some raters described this fragment as *convencencia*, i.e., expressing what Christina Kirchner is confident about. The expressiveness of this fragment is also enhanced by the accentuating gestures of the left hand highlighting the segment that contains the question *¿qué va a pasar?* (left hand at chest level, fingers folded in a pinch), as well as the ending of the *que pase* answer (a sharp movement of the left hand towards the audience with the index finger extended) (see Fig. 1).

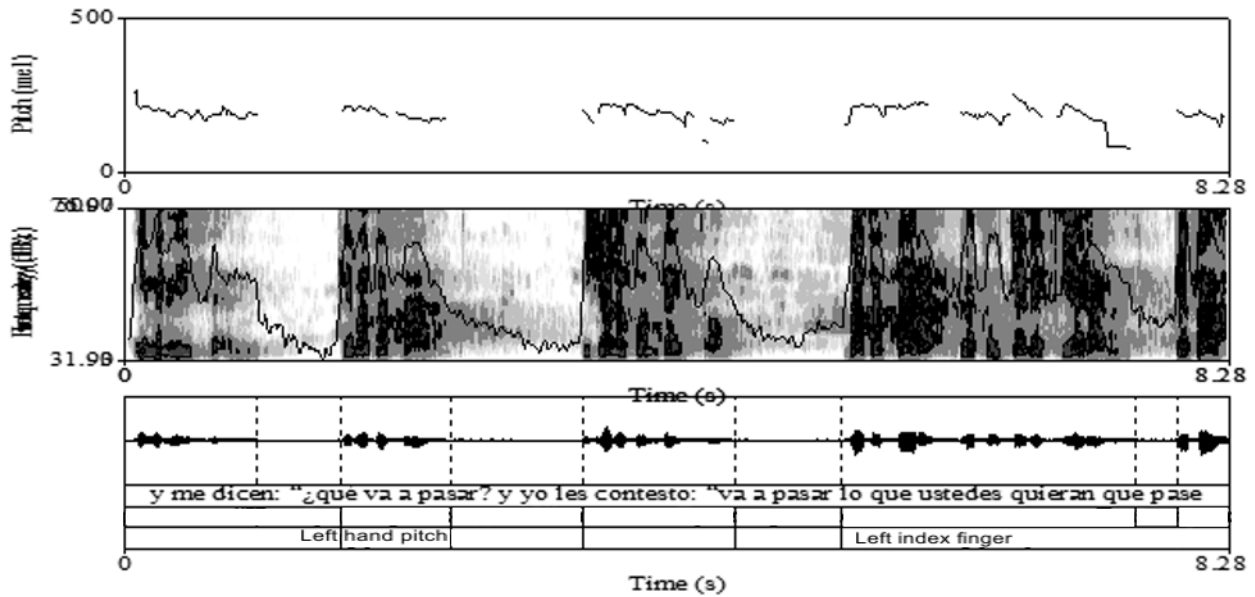


Fig. 1. Intonogramme of the phrase “y me dicen: ‘¿qué va a pasar?’ y yo les contesto: ‘va a pasar lo que ustedes quieran que pase’ / “They ask me, ‘What is going to happen?’ and I reply ‘Whatever you want to happen will happen’” (Cristina Fernández de Kirchner 25 de Mayo. 2015 to Aniversario de la Revolución de Mayo).

In their appeals to the public, Spanish women, in turn, highlight rational arguments and facts emphasising them with one-time gestures of the right or left hands directed towards the listeners with fingers folded into a fist or wide open, “pinch” gesture, or hand wave towards the audience. For instance, strong expression is noted by the raters in the final part of Manuela Carmena’s speech at the rally on the occasion of her victory in the elections of the mayor of Madrid, which is particularly manifested in the repeating segment *vale la pena. ¡Vale la pena!* They are worth it (change – Author’s note.)! The increase in expressiveness is also reflected in increased pitch (F_{max} 388 Hz) and intensity (I_{max} 83.3 dB) throughout the final phrase of her speech (See Fig. 2).

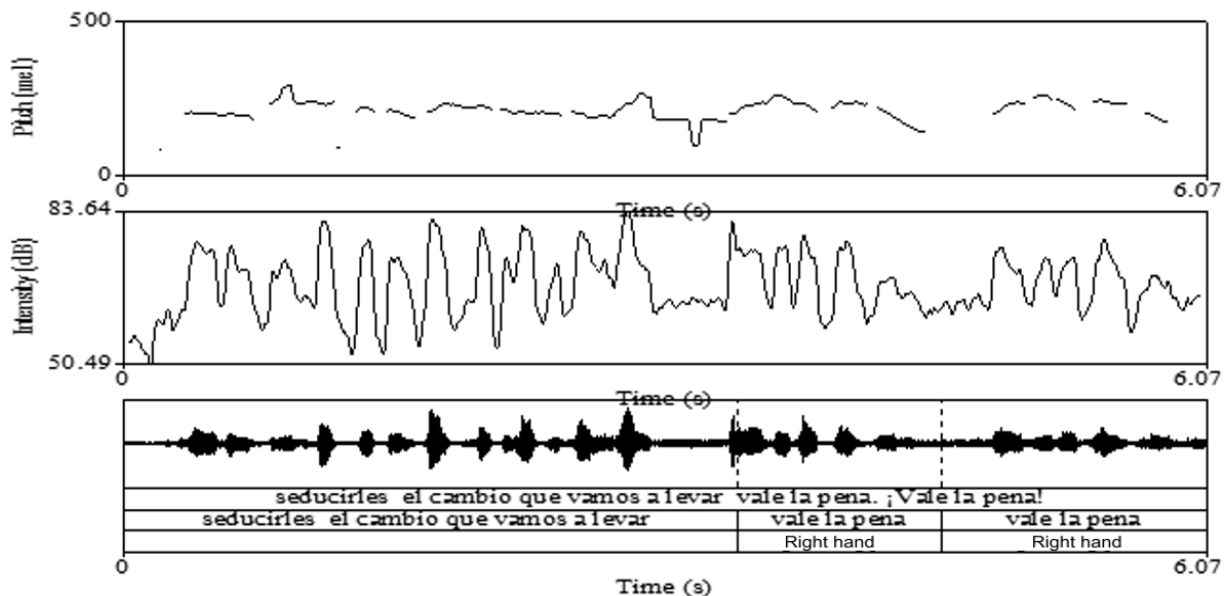


Fig. 2. Intonogramme of the phrase “...el cambio que vamos a llevar vale la pena. ¡Vale la pena!” / “...the changes we are going to make are worth it. They are worth it! (Manuela Carmena 24 de Mayo 2015. Discurso electoral en Madrid).

5. Discussion

Based on an analysis and generalisation of the existing theoretical views and experimental data regarding the interpretation of the specific features of oral female speech, particularly in political discourse, we note its *differential characteristics*, which are classified by verbal, paraverbal and discursive criteria.

Verbal attributes of female political speech are associated with exaggerated expressiveness and manifest themselves stylistically (metaphors, epithets, lexical repetitions and contrasts) and in specific syntactic constructions (simple, elliptic sentences, rhetorical questions, repetitions, inversions). *Paraverbal* attributes of the speech of a woman actively presenting herself in political discourse are provided by prosodic expressiveness, tonal and dynamic emphases, active use of gestures, direct contact with the audience, and a smile. *Discursive* attributes of female political speech are represented by the use of non-conflict strategies, contact-setting and mitigating tactics, as well as the tactics of using personal experience or the experience of the inner circle.

With reference to our findings, we conclude that there are a number of differences in the organisation of female political discourse in Spain and Latin America.

For instance, the public speech of *Latin American female politicians* is characterised by increased expressiveness reflected in the acceleration of the speech periods, increased voice sonority, increased audibility of the sound, tonal variations in the final part of the statement, transitions to the vocal sharp voice phonation, shouting, and enhanced gesticulation and expressive facial mimics characteristic of southern ethnic groups in general. This can also be explained by the fact that females are present in all Latin American institutional discourses and Latin American women behave in a feminine way in terms of arguments, emotions, kinetics, bright clothes, etc. At the same time, *Spanish female politicians* are guided by the European cultural code requiring neutralisation of the gender in all formal spheres: in the assessment of the success of Spanish female politicians their democratic character, appeal to the facts and social significance of events are in the forefront.

We came to the conclusion that the linguistic chain is not a decisive factor in determining gender-related differences in the female political discourse of Spain and Latin America. The contrasting aspect in the comparison of gender-related factors in the public speech of female politicians is formed by paraverbal and discursive means that are most closely related to the linguistic culture of Latin America and Spain and reflect them.

The motivation and emotional state of Latin American women involved in active political struggle and usually displaying the image of *iron ladies* (Eva Perón, Michelle Bachelet, Lydia Gayler Tejada, Rosalia Arteaga, Erta Pascal Truilot) are most adequately conveyed by the paraverbal components of speech, such as gestures, pauses, look, silence, etc., as well as the components of their image (clothes, appearance, gait, bad habits, health, temperament, attitude to the family, etc.).

6. Conclusions

Therefore, we can conclude that representatives of the two linguistic cultures use expressive kinetic highlighting of both the keywords of the arguments (concept words with value-related semantics, imperatives, inclusive “we”, rhetorical questions, metaphors, etc.) and semantically inseparable words (conjunctions, pronouns, link verbs, articles, etc.). This shows that female expressiveness is not focused on the semantic structure of the utterance, but has kinetic dynamics independent of this structure. This approach is indicative of the autonomy of female expressiveness in Spanish-speaking political discourse and allows building an updated model of female political expressiveness based on the integrity of its verbal and paraverbal categories.

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