

A critical discourse analysis of Sánchez's resignation speeches in 2016 and 2024

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This study provides a critical discourse analysis of Sánchez's resignation speeches during two distinct periods: first, in 2016, when he resigned following Rajoy's election as President of Spain amid corruption allegations, prompting Sánchez to call for a motion of no confidence; and second, in 2024, when Sánchez faced resignation in the context of alleged involvement in his wife's corruption scandal. The study aims to examine the linguistic variations in Sánchez's discourse across these two time periods. This study employs a mixed-methods approach to elucidate both quantitative and qualitative differences and/or similarities in Sánchez's discourse. Preliminary findings indicate that Sánchez's discourse exhibits notable differences between the two periods: in 2016, he adopts a more individualistic stance, assuming greater personal responsibility and maintaining a more optimistic perspective. In contrast, the 2024 discourse reflects a more collectivist approach, wherein Sánchez distributes responsibility among other stakeholders, likely due to the gravity of the situation involving not only his role as head of the PSOE party but also as President of Spain.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, resignation speech, Pedro Sánchez, linguistic variations*

1 Introduction

A discourse analysis approach is particularly relevant for understanding how discourse is constructed and the extent to which it can be manipulative and/or persuasive when addressing an audience. This is especially applicable in the context of political communication, where candidates aim to capture public attention and, ultimately, secure votes (see, for example, Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2015; Díez-Prados & Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2018; Gil-Bonilla, 2024, among others). As outlined in Section 2 (i.e., Related Work), a range of studies has examined political discourse in the Spanish context, specifically focusing on Sánchez's communicative strategies. However, to the best of my knowledge and based on the sources consulted, research examining how Sánchez's discourse evolves over time, particularly across different resignation announcements within similar contexts, remains scarce and relatively underexplored.

The discourses selected for this analysis are from two distinct periods: one from 2016 and another from 2024.¹ The context surrounding these discourses relates to Sánchez's intentions to resign at different times. The 2016 discourse was delivered when Sánchez resigned as the candidate of the PSOE party following Rajoy's election victory. The 2024 discourse pertains to his recent attempt to resign due to allegations of his wife's involvement in corruption issues. The objective of this research is, therefore, to examine these distinct periods to identify any differences and/or similarities in Sánchez's discourse. Notably, these discourses occurred at different points in Sánchez's career: the first when he was a candidate,

¹ See Appendix section, where an English translation has been provided to facilitate a clearer understanding of the discourses analyzed. Appendix A corresponds to Sánchez's discourse from 2016, while Appendix B pertains to the one delivered in 2024.

and the second as the current President of Spain. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, with quantitative analysis facilitated by the UAM Corpus Tool developed by O'Donnell (2021) (further details provided in Section 4).

This research is organized as follows: The introduction outlines the objectives of the study and the research gap it seeks to address. Section 2 presents a review of the literature, discussing studies similar to the present research and thereby underscoring the significance of the identified research gap. Section 3 addresses the theoretical framework, specifically the synthetic model chosen for analyzing the stancetaking expressions used by Sánchez. Section 4 relates to the methodology, detailing the objectives and the software utilized for the quantitative analysis. Section 5 presents the analysis and discussion of results, where the research questions will be answered. Finally, Section 6 offers concluding remarks and suggests further avenues for research.

2 Related Work

There is a substantial body of research that examines linguistic strategies to understand how speakers and/or political candidates manipulate and/or persuade audiences to secure votes immediately before elections (e.g., Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2015; Díez-Prados & Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2018; Mariscal-Ríos, 2022; Gil-Bonilla, 2024; among others). However, linguistic strategies are not only applicable in this context as manipulative tools in voting practices but also in chronological studies. These studies approach speakers' communicative events across different periods to analyze how their discourse evolves over time (e.g., Gil-Bonilla, 2020; Pitarch, 2020; Stuardo-Concha et al., 2021; Cháves-Montero, 2023; among others). This perspective extends beyond the immediate need to understand pre-election discourse aimed at attracting audience attention and securing votes.

Various authors focus on the analysis of persuasive and/or manipulative strategies in candidates' pre-electoral debates. For instance, Cabrejas-Peñuelas (2015) analyzes the 2011 Rajoy-Rubalcaba and 2008 Obama-McCain pre-electoral debates, examining how the candidates attack one another, comparing political candidates from different cultures. Similarly, Díez-Prados & Cabrejas-Peñuelas (2018) explore the evaluative function of language in the same Rajoy-Rubalcaba and Obama-McCain debates. Their analysis delves into the expression of "status", or how the world is presented, and its persuasive potential in pre-electoral debates.

Gil-Bonilla (2024), in his doctoral dissertation, examines the 2015-2016 pre-electoral debates featuring Sánchez, leader of the PSOE, in comparison to his main political opponents of the time (i.e., Rajoy, Iglesias, and Rivera). His analysis specifically explores the strategies each candidate employs to persuade the audience on critical issues such as the economy, immigration, and foreign affairs during these pre-electoral debates. In a related study, Mariscal-Ríos (2022) conducts a multilingual, contrastive analysis of political speeches from the first quarter of 2020, delivered by leaders in Spain, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Portugal. This analysis adopts a broader perspective, focusing on general political discourse rather than on individual candidates.

While there is indeed a variety of studies addressing pre-electoral debates within the Spanish context, including ones related to this study's focus on Sánchez's discursive practices, the present study differs in its approach. Unlike previous research that emphasizes pre-electoral analysis, this study intends to conduct a diachronic examination of Sánchez's discourse across

two similar yet distinct periods (i.e., resignation speeches), assessing how his rhetoric has evolved over time.

Among studies examining discourse over time, Cháves-Montero (2023) focuses on analyzing tweets addressing social-service issues posted on Twitter during various electoral campaigns in Spain from 2015 to 2019. This study adopts a broad perspective, exploring the use of tweets across different time periods. Similarly, Pitarch (2020) analyzes 630 tweets posted by four Spanish political leaders on their personal Twitter accounts, examining their communication styles on this social platform. Other studies, such as Stuardo-Concha et al. (2021), review academic publications on media and political discourse related to migration in Spain, covering a range of work published between 2014 and 2019.

Although these studies address a chronological analysis of Spanish political discourse, they differ significantly from the current study's objectives. Specifically, these earlier studies emphasize tweets, which—unlike the present study's focus on oral political discourse—can be carefully crafted and lack the spontaneity typical of live, spoken discourse, such as those delivered by Sánchez and scrutinized in the current paper. The analysis of these tweets remains relevant to include in the literature review, as it demonstrates how other scholars have examined political discourse from a chronological perspective. This contrast further highlights the research gap addressed by the current investigation, emphasizing its unique methodological contribution to the chronological analysis of political discourse.

3 Theoretical Framework

The synthetic model selected for this study is the one proposed by Gil-Bonilla (2024), which combines two frameworks: Marín-Arrese's (2011a, 2011b) model and van Dijk's (2008) ideological polarization within his socio-cognitive approach. Specifically, the stancetaking strategies analyzed in this research are those identified by Marín-Arrese as EFFECTIVE and EPISTEMIC stance strategies. The former refers to how speakers use their communicative events to exert influence on the course of reality itself. Within this stance strategy, various expressions are included, such as deonticity, assessments, attitudinals, and directives. The latter relates to the speaker's/writer's estimations regarding their knowledge and the potential realization of events. This category encompasses epistemic stance markers, truth-factual validity, and evidential markers, which include experiential, cognitive, and communicative ones.

Concerning effective stance, DEONTIC MARKERS are those modals indicating necessity (e.g., *need to*, *it is necessary*) and/or obligation (e.g., *have to*, *must*). ASSESSING MARKERS encompass expressions of judgments regarding desirability, necessity, or possibility concerning specific circumstances (e.g., *We are required to...*), as well as other non-verbal expressions (e.g., *duty*). Marín-Arrese (2011a, p. 268) further elaborates that within assessments, one may find impersonal constructions that, on the one hand, indicate the generalized inclination or advisability of an event's realization and, on the other, "describe the speaker's emotive reaction to the occurrence of the event" (e.g., *It is crucial*, *It is urgent*, *It is right*, *It is time to...*).

ATTITUDINALS relate to personal predicates expressing the speaker's inclination and volition (e.g., *I hope*, *I want*, *I'm not willing*) or intention (e.g., *We resolved*, *I plan*), as well as predicative adjectives (e.g., *We are resolved to*), relational constructions involving nominals and sentence adverbs, and expressions of volitive modality (e.g., *modals will*, *won't*) (Marín-

Arrese, 2011a). DIRECTIVE MARKERS, as identified by Marín-Arrese (2011a, p. 271), include expressions that carry an imperative mood, either with “a conventional force” or “a hortative value”. For instance, verbs of communication used in a “performative sense with directive illocutionary force” (e.g., *We are urging*) or other expressions that indicate “the speaker’s effective stance regarding the event’s realization” (e.g., *We agree that*).

Regarding epistemic stance markers, expressions of EPISTEMIC MODALITY refer to the speaker’s degree of certainty or uncertainty concerning the truth or likelihood of a proposition or statement. These can be categorized into different degrees of certainty: high certainty or necessity (e.g., *must, cannot, certainly*), medium certainty or probability (e.g., *will, would, should, probably*), and low certainty or possibility (e.g., *may, could, perhaps*) (for further details, see Marín-Arrese, 2011a, 2011b, 2015; van der Auwera & Plungian, 1998; Palmer, 2001; inter alia). TRUTH-FACTUAL VALIDITY regards judgments about the truth in the realization of communicative events (e.g., *The truth is, in my judgment*). By employing this marker, the speaker refers to their purportedly sincere view, simultaneously demonstrating a strong attitudinal stance that can be shared by others as well (González, 2015).

Concerning evidential markers within epistemic stance expressions, EXPERIENTIAL EVIDENTIALITY applies to those expressions used by speakers indicating they have directly experienced the events they describe (e.g., *We have seen, We have witnessed, We have experienced*). COGNITIVE EVIDENTIALITY, as noted by Marín-Arrese (2011a, p. 274), comprises the “mental world of the speaker”. This category encompasses various expressions, including mental state predicates (e.g., *I believe, I think, We know, I am convinced*), non-verbal markers (e.g., *doubtless, without doubt*), and relational and existential constructions involving nominals (e.g., *My guess was, There was no doubt in my mind, My belief*). Other cognitive markers also fall under this evidential category, as they describe the speaker’s “access to information as a result of mental processes” (e.g., *I have come to the conclusion, I gather*). Additionally, this category includes predicates referring to “inferential processes involving knowledge interpretation” (e.g., *That means*). Lastly, COMMUNICATIVE EVIDENTIALITY involves speakers portraying themselves as the source of evidence (e.g., *I say to you, I said*). As Marín-Arrese (2011a) asserts, the use of this epistemic stance marker allows “speakers to not only convey their knowledge of the event but also validate the proposition by appealing to their authority as public personae” (p. 275).

Table 1 below provides a summary of the stancetaking strategies proposed by Marín-Arrese (2011a, 2011b), organized to facilitate accessibility and visual comprehension of each stance marker category, along with illustrative examples to clarify interpretation. Following a detailed definition and exemplification of these stance markers, further explanation is provided below on how these markers relate to van Dijk’s (2008) concept of ideological polarization, specifically the *us* vs. *them* dynamic.

Table 1: Overview of effective and epistemic stance markers²

EFFECTIVE STANCE		EPISTEMIC STANCE	
Deonticity: These modals indicate possibility and/or necessity.	<i>must, should ... can, cannot ... have to, need to ... It is necessary to...</i>	Epistemic modality: Epistemic modals; adverbs, predicative adjs. and nominals.	<i>must, will, would, may... Certainly..., Perhaps..., Indeed ...</i>

² taken from Marín-Arrese (2011a).

Assessments: These markers express desirability, requirement or normativity.	<i>That requires ...; We are required to...; It is essential to... It is right to ...; It is fair to ...</i>	Truth-Factual validity: These markers involve judgments about the truth in the realization of communicative events.	<i>I am confident that ... The truth is..., The fact is... In my judgement..., Frankly...</i>
Attitudinals: These modals express volition, intention, or commitment.	<i>I will/won't, I would not... I wanted/intended to ..., I hoped ...</i>	Experiential evidentiality: These markers involve expressions where speakers suggest personal experience of events.	<i>We have seen..., We have experienced...,</i>
Directives: These markers are used with a directive illocutionary force or a hortative value.	<i>We urging... Let me make it clear... Let us recall...</i>	Cognitive evidentiality: This marker relates to the speaker's mental perspective and certainty.	<i>I think..., I have come to the conclusion... We all know..., We have learned... That means..., Presumably..</i>
		Communicative evidentiality: This marker involves communication and verbal interaction.	<i>I say to you ..., I said... That suggests..., That implies...</i>

In Gil-Bonilla's (2024) synthetic model, these stancetaking expressions are integrated within van Dijk's (2008) framework of ideological polarization, specifically the dichotomy of *us* versus *them*. According to van Dijk's ideological square, communicators often emphasize their own positive attributes and the negative aspects of others, while downplaying their own negative qualities and the positive attributes of others. By integrating Marín-Arrese's stancetaking expressions with this framework, it becomes possible to analyze how and in what contexts different effective and epistemic stance markers contribute to delineating in-group versus out-group dynamics according to ideological polarization.

For example, the statement *we are going to rebuild our economy* serves as an attitudinal marker that conveys a positive in-group nuance, portraying the speaker and their group—presumably the citizens or supporters of a political agenda—as proactive and committed to collective well-being. In contrast, the expression *we are going to tear those families apart because immigrants are a problem for the country* represents a negative out-group nuance. This statement reflects the speaker's adverse stance towards immigrants, characterizing them as a societal issue that necessitates harmful action. Here, the attitudinal marker explicitly signals an intention to harm a vulnerable group, thereby reinforcing an in-group identity that positions the speaker and their supporters as protectors of the nation against perceived threats.

4 Methodology

This section will delineate, firstly, the objectives sought and the research questions to be addressed, and secondly, the software employed for quantitative analysis, specifically the UAM Corpus Tool (O'Donnell, 2021). This study, therefore, adopts a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analyses. This methodology involves not only the examination of data frequencies but also the presentation of specific instances and a detailed exploration of how these frequencies operate qualitatively.

4.1 Objectives and research questions

As outlined in the introductory section, the primary objective of this study is to assess the extent to which Sánchez's discourse evolves when attempting to resign during two distinct periods, each characterized by different contextual circumstances. Specifically, the analysis contrasts his position as a mere candidate of the PSOE party in 2016 with his role as the President of Spain in 2024.³ This objective leads to the following research questions:

(RQ 1) Which types of stancetaking expressions are most often used by Sánchez from one period to another?

(RQ 2) What function do these discursive strategies fulfill when attempting to resign as either a candidate or president?

These research questions will be addressed using the synthetic model proposed by Gil-Bonilla (2024) in his doctoral thesis. This model will be examined from a quantitative perspective, utilizing the UAM Corpus Tool, as will be detailed in the next subsection.

4.2 The UAM Corpus Tool software

This software has been employed for the quantitative analysis due to its capacity not only to provide raw percentages but also to perform chi-square tests, which help determine whether observed differences are statistically significant. The 2016 discourse comprises 1,500 words, while the 2024 discourse consists of 1,100 words. The statistical analysis was conducted as follows: Initially, the UAM Corpus Tool allows for the upload of the discourses in TXT format, which then facilitates the creation of schemes for the various categories under examination.

In this instance, one scheme was developed to categorize stancetaking strategies, including effective and epistemic stances, alongside ideological polarization (e.g., *deonticity ingroup*, *deonticity outgroup*). Another scheme was established to denote the temporal context of each discourse (i.e., 2016 or 2024). Subsequently, these schemes were used to manually tag the uploaded TXT discourses. This involved a meticulous process of reading the texts to ensure that each linguistic expression was accurately tagged and categorized according to its corresponding stancetaking marker. An expression identified as an attitudinal marker was labeled as attitudinal ingroup or attitudinal outgroup depending on its context and its temporal classification (e.g., *categorizing the expression based on its temporal alignment with either 2016 or 2024*).

To facilitate the creation of frequency tables (as shown in Table 2 below), it was necessary to accurately identify these categories. The UAM Corpus Tool provides results

³ As noted elsewhere, an English translation of these discourses is presented in the Appendix section. These translations were prepared by the author of this paper to ensure clearer comprehension for a wider audience.

categorized as follows: a single plus sign + denotes weak significance, indicating occurrences observed in 90% of cases; double plus signs ++ represent medium significance, observed in 95% of cases; and triple plus signs +++ indicate high significance, occurring in 98% of cases. Consequently, only those instances with representativeness as indicated by one of these significance levels were included in the Table. Nonetheless, additional representative cases that may not be highlighted from a quantitative perspective will be examined qualitatively, thereby complementing and reinforcing the quantitative findings.

5 Analysis and discussion

From a quantitative perspective, it is evident that in Sánchez's 2016 discourse, when he sought to resign as the PSOE candidate, he consistently utilized linguistic strategies with an outgroup connotation (see Table 2 below). It is important to note that while these participants or details are treated as an outgroup, it does not necessarily imply negative depictions. This aspect will be examined in greater detail through qualitative analysis in the following sections (Section 4.1 and Section 4.2). Before proceeding to the qualitative analysis, it should be noted that Table 2 reveals that in the 2016 speech, Sánchez employed effective stance markers, specifically attitudinal ones, in 20 percent of cases, indicating his personal intentions in his communicative practice. When considering epistemic stance markers, he made use of epistemic modality, in the 2016 speech, indicating the likelihood of events occurring in 36 percent of cases.

It should also be borne in mind that other interesting markers from these two speeches will be identified and scrutinized, even if they do not show a direct quantitative difference. This approach is selected because further differences and intriguing connotations can be uncovered, helping to reinforce the quantitatively significant results or reveal additional insights that may not be feasible to detect through a quantitative approach alone. Although some markers do not appear as significant in Table 2, this does not imply they lack significance altogether. A lack of quantitative difference might suggest that the candidate uses similar linguistic markers with comparable frequency across both periods, thereby not highlighted in the table. For instance, Table 2 does not indicate a notable quantitative difference concerning attitudinal and epistemic stance markers as an ingroup. However, these nuances warrant further qualitative analysis to fully understand their contextual implications.

Table 2: Stancetaking resources in Sánchez’s discourse during his 2016 and 2024 resignations⁴

	Sánchez 2016		Sánchez 2024			
Feature	N	Percent	N	Percent	ChiSqu	Sign
Total Units	50		23			
EFFECTIVE STANCE						
attitudinals outgroup	10	20.00	1	4.35	3.016	+
EPISTEMIC STANCE						
epistemic modality outgroup	18	36.00	2	8.70	5.904	+++

5.1 Epistemic modality as an ingroup vs. epistemic modality as an outgroup

As evidenced in Table 2, Sánchez frequently utilized discursive markers to express his stance as an outgroup in the 2016. This is particularly notable in his use of epistemic stance (EP) markers (see example (1) below). The phrase employs the conditional form *would be*, exemplifying epistemic modality. In this context, *would be* conveys the speaker’s conjecture or speculation about the optimal way to mitigate the adverse effects of facilitating Rajoy’s investiture on their organization. The use of *would be* indicates that the speaker is not presenting a fact but rather suggesting a possible scenario based on their knowledge and judgment.

- (1) *Sería* [EP] esa la manera de que la decisión de facilitar la investidura de Rajoy fuera lo menos desgarradora [OG] posible para nuestra organización. (That *would* [EP] be the way to make the decision to facilitate Rajoy’s investiture as least heart-wrenching [OG] as possible for our organization) (Sánchez’s 2016 speech).

In terms of ideological polarization (see van Dijk, 2008), this phrase can be interpreted as positioning the speaker within an outgroup (OG). Ideological polarization involves dividing the social world into in-groups (*us*) and out-groups (*them*), often accompanied by negative evaluations of the out-group and positive evaluations of the in-group. By framing the decision to facilitate Rajoy’s investiture as potentially *heart-wrenching* for *our organization*, the speaker implicitly distances himself from Rajoy and his political group. This language choice highlights an internal conflict and suggests that Rajoy and his supporters are perceived as an out-group whose interests or actions conflict with those of the speaker’s organization. The term *our organization* bolsters group identity and solidarity among the speaker’s peers, while *heart-wrenching* conveys the emotional and organizational cost of identifying, even temporarily, with

⁴ As can be observed, the totals in Table 2 do not add up to 100%. Specifically, the table accounts for 56% of the data, comprising 20% of attitudinal markers categorized as outgroup and 36% of epistemic modality markers also classified as outgroup. The remaining percentage corresponds to other types of markers that did not yield statistically significant results. For example, deontic markers as outgroup accounted for only 2% in 2016 and 4% in 2024. Similarly, cognitive evidentiality as ingroup represented just 4% in both periods. As stated in the Methodology section, only those cases meeting thresholds of statistical significance, at the 90%, 95%, or 98% confidence levels, were included in Table 2. This selective inclusion aims to prevent misrepresentation of marginal cases and to ensure clarity and relevance in the interpretation of the data presented.

the out-group represented by Rajoy. In this context, Sánchez's group can be seen as adopting a victimized position, implying that they, to some extent, constitute an outgroup.

Sánchez's strategic use of pathos in his resignation speech reflects a nuanced approach to emotional appeal and group solidarity.⁵ By employing terms like *our organization*, Sánchez fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose among his party members, reinforcing their collective identity and commitment during a challenging period. This inclusive language creates a strong emotional bond within the group, enhancing their sense of belonging and mutual support. Furthermore, his use of the term *heart-wrenching* to describe the association with Rajoy's faction serves as a powerful pathos device, emphasizing the emotional and organizational sacrifices involved. This pathos strategy not only humanizes the political conflict but also identifies the audience's emotional response with Sánchez's narrative, potentially translating into increased support for his political position and future endeavors. This notion is further supported by the following statement:

- (2) El innecesario voto en bloque del Grupo Parlamentario hace que, ironías de la vida, sea obligada mi renuncia como diputado [OG] al no poder conciliar mis dos compromisos (el electoral y el partidario) mientras que Mariano Rajoy *pasará* [EP] a ser, en nuestra historia democrática, uno de los candidatos que obtenga menos votos en contra en su investidura a la presidencia del Gobierno. (The unnecessary bloc voting of the Parliamentary Group means that, ironically, my resignation as a deputy [OG] is mandatory as I cannot reconcile my two commitments (electoral and party) while Mariano Rajoy will become [EP], in our democratic history, one of the candidates with the fewest votes against his investiture as President of the Government) (Sánchez's 2016 speech).

The phrase *unnecessary bloc voting of the Parliamentary Group* indicates a critical stance, suggesting that the bloc voting is perceived as unnecessary and counterproductive. This critique establishes a contrast between Sánchez's values or expectations and the actions of the parliamentary group, thereby creating a sense of detachment from the group's decision-making process. Furthermore, the reference to Mariano Rajoy becoming *one of the candidates with the fewest votes against his investiture* emphasizes the outgroup perspective. By contrasting Rajoy's relatively smooth investiture with the personal and professional sacrifices made by Sánchez, Sánchez indicates a discontent between their own challenges and the success of a figure they oppose. This framing highlights the division between the speaker (and their supporters) and the political entities or individuals perceived as responsible for his resignation. Thus, it exemplifies van Dijk's concept of ideological polarization. In this context, Sánchez may be implying that his own political party is similarly marginalized, positioning it as an outgroup due to its perceived lack of consideration and support for its interests. These assumptions stand with Eller et al.'s (2015) concept of counternormative, when Sánchez makes use of the epistemic outgroup to emphasize negative interactions with Rajoy. Concurrently, Sánchez evaluates the ingroup negatively, positioning it as a potential outgroup, thereby cultivating a sense of empathy towards his political party.

In the 2016 speech, Sánchez's use of epistemic markers demonstrates a strategic approach to modulating the impact of his communication, functioning both as a hedging device and a booster. The former⁶ is employed to soften the assertiveness of one's discourse, while the latter⁷ serves to convey certainty in one's communicative intent. The conditional construction (e.g., *that would be*) functions as a hedging device, introducing a degree of uncertainty or

⁵ For further details, see Amossy (2000).

⁶ see Kusumawati et al. (2021).

⁷ see Hylland (2004).

speculation into the statement. By framing the potential outcome in terms of *would be*, Sánchez softens the assertion, suggesting that mitigating the impact on his organization is a hypothetical scenario rather than a definitive outcome. This hedging approach allows him to present the emotional toll of facilitating Rajoy's investiture as less directly attributable to his party's actions, thus moderating the force of his critique and potentially reducing the immediate negative impact on his political image.

Conversely, when Sánchez critiques Rajoy's party in the phrase *Mariano Rajoy will become [EP], in our democratic history, one of the candidates with the fewest votes against his investiture as President of the Government* he uses epistemic markers in a way that amplifies his statement's impact. The phrase *will become* serves as a booster, expressing a high level of certainty about Rajoy's future position. This assertive language suggests a strong likelihood of Rajoy achieving a significant milestone, in this case, becoming one of the candidates with the fewest votes against his investiture. By using a definitive and assertive construction, Sánchez strengthens the impact of his criticism and emphasizes the undesirability of Rajoy's success. This contrast between hedging and boosting illustrates how Sánchez strategically adjusts his use of epistemic modality to modulate the force of his arguments and shape the audience's perception of both his party's struggles and the opposition's actions.

In contrast to Sánchez's 2016 speech, his 2024 speech also utilizes epistemic stance markers, as noted in example 3 below. However, these markers are employed in a distinctly different manner, serving to position Sánchez and their party within the ingroup (IG). In this context, epistemic stance markers convey the speaker's attitude and/or evaluations regarding the situation. The expression *It is true* reflects the speaker's evaluative stance, indicating that the proposition is to be regarded as factual or unquestionable, insofar as the speaker seeks to demonstrate that the motives in question are universally comprehensible and relatable, as they align with the core values of a supportive and family-oriented society such as that of Spain. However, it also occurs within a concessive structure, in which the speaker concedes a particular point in order to introduce a subsequent clause that presents a more significant or contrasting perspective. In this case, the marker serves to downplay the relevance of the initial statement, thereby highlighting and giving prominence to the information that follows (König, 1988).

The contrasting approach is evident in the manner in which these personal reasons are framed within a broader societal context. Although the action is undertaken for personal reasons, the speaker relates these motives to universal values that resonate with the audience: *but these are reasons that everyone can understand and relate to*. This transition from individual motivations to collective values creates a distinction between personal actions and shared societal norms. By emphasizing that these personal motives *align with core values of a supportive and family-oriented society like the Spanish one*, Sánchez connects personal actions to communal values, thereby reinforcing a sense of collective identity and solidarity. This connection establishes the bond within the ingroup, as it assures the audience that the speaker's actions are consistent with the group's core values and collective identity.

- (3) O decimos basta o esta degradación de la vida pública *determinará* [EP] nuestro futuro condenándonos como país. *Es cierto* [EP] que he dado este paso por motivos personales, pero son motivos que todo el mundo puede entender y sentir como propios, porque responden a valores troncales de una sociedad solidaria y familiar como es la española [IG]. (Either we say enough, or this degradation of public life *will determine* [EP] our future, condemning us as a country. *It is true* [EP] that I have taken this step for personal reasons, but these are reasons that everyone can understand and relate to because they align with core values of a supportive and familial society like Spain's [IG]) (Sánchez's 2024 speech).

Epistemic modality as an ingroup can also be observed in Sánchez's 2016 speech (as shown in example 4 below). The phrase *will make possible* conveys a high level of certainty and confidence regarding the future, indicating that the commitment and participation of group members will inevitably lead to the recovery and reconstruction of the PSOE. This statement transcends a mere prediction, asserting a firm belief in the group's efficacy and influence. The speaker emphasizes the crucial role that group members play in achieving the party's objectives. This deployment of epistemic modality is intended to reassure and motivate the group, cultivating a sense of unity and purpose. It implies that the desired outcomes are not only attainable but also anticipated, based on the collective efforts of the group.

In examples (3) and (4), Sánchez employs epistemic markers as boosters, as further observed by El Hawary et al. (2020), boosters, as discursive strategies, amplify and/or emphasize one's communicative acts (e.g., *will determine, it is true, will make possible*) to sustain the certainty and urgency of his messages, but the nuances in their application highlight different aspects of his discourse. In example (3), Sánchez uses the phrase *We either say enough or this degradation of public life will determine our future, condemning us as a country*. The epistemic marker *will determine* conveys a high degree of certainty about the negative consequences of continued public life degradation. This definitive statement serves as a booster, emphasizing the critical nature of the situation and the dire need for immediate action. The certainty expressed through *will determine* underlines the speaker's belief in the inevitable outcome if the current trajectory continues, thereby urging the audience to recognize the gravity of the issue and respond accordingly. Additionally, the subsequent phrase *It is true that I have taken this step for personal reasons* further bolsters the credibility of his actions by affirming their authenticity and relatability. By connecting these personal motives to core societal values, Sánchez promotes the harmony of his actions with the collective identity of the Spanish society, thus enhancing ingroup solidarity.

In example (4), the phrase *Your commitment and participation will make possible the recovery and reconstruction of the PSOE* uses the epistemic marker *will make* to project certainty about the future success of the party's goals. This statement functions as a booster, instilling confidence in the group's ability to achieve these outcomes. While both examples employ epistemic markers as boosters to convey certainty and urgency, the nuances lie in the contexts and purposes of these statements. In example (3), the booster indicates the immediate need for decisive action, suggesting that the situation requires urgent intervention in the present moment. The use of the booster here emphasizes the pressing nature of the issue and the necessity of addressing it without delay. In contrast, example (4) employs the booster to suggest a more gradual approach, indicating that the actions required for recovery and reconstruction are part of a longer-term process. The emphasis is on the progressive nature of these efforts, with the expectation that the desired outcomes will unfold over time. The booster, in this context, serves to instill confidence in the ongoing commitment to rebuilding, while acknowledging that the process will take place in the future rather than immediately.

- (4) Su compromiso y su participación son las que dan credibilidad al proyecto socialista. Su compromiso y su participación *harán* [EP] posible la recuperación y reconstrucción del PSOE [IG]. (Your commitment and participation are what lend credibility to the socialist project. Your commitment and participation *will make* [EP] the recovery and reconstruction of the PSOE [IG] possible) (Sánchez's 2016 speech).

Despite these apparent similarities and/or differences, it is essential to consider the evolution of language use across different periods (see, for instance, van Dijk, 2008; Gil-Bonilla, 2020, 2021, 2024; Hofmann et al., 2020). In the 2016 speech, Sánchez utilizes a simpler and more

direct lexicon (e.g., *a united and fraternal PSOE*) than the more complex language found in the 2024 speech. The terms *united* and *fraternal* are straightforward and readily comprehensible to a broad audience, rendering the message accessible and relatable, emphasizing unity and brotherhood within the party. This stands in contrast to the more elaborate and nuanced language observed in 2024, (e.g., *this degradation of public life will determine our future, condemning us as a country*), which employs a more abstract lexicon to achieve a heightened rhetorical effect. The term *degradation* signifies a process of decline or deterioration, which immediately introduces a sense of urgency and seriousness. This word choice implies a systemic issue that affects the entire structure of public life, rather than a singular or isolated problem, thereby prompting the audience to consider the broader implications.

The phrase *determine our future* carries significant weight, suggesting that the current state of affairs will have a decisive impact on the trajectory of the nation. This deterministic language stresses the inevitability of the consequences, urging the audience to understand that their actions (or inactions) in the present moment will shape the long-term outcomes for the country. The term *condemning* further amplifies this by introducing a moral dimension, implying that the nation will suffer severe repercussions, not just practical ones. This moral condemnation invokes a strong emotional response, tapping into fears and concerns about national identity and well-being.

It can be observed that during the period when Sánchez resigned due to his disagreement with Rajoy's party, he employed simpler language, likely as a strategic move to foster unity and lay the groundwork for a potential return to the PSOE. This choice of simpler lexicon could have been aimed at ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness, thus enhancing solidarity among his audience. In contrast, when addressing more serious matters within his party, such as the potential corruption allegations involving his wife in the 2024 speech, Sánchez's discourse became notably more complex, requiring greater cognitive effort from his audience.

As O'Halloran (2007) suggests, the complexity of language directly influences the cognitive effort required to understand a discourse. In this context, the use of complex language may serve a specific purpose: to slow down the audience's processing time and require them to engage more deeply with the content. This could imply that Sánchez, in this more challenging communicative context, might be less comfortable with the subject matter. Typically, when a speaker is at ease with their message, they aim to communicate in a way that minimizes the audience's cognitive effort, facilitating easier and quicker comprehension. However, when a speaker opts for more complex language, it may indicate discomfort or a desire to obscure or delay immediate understanding, possibly due to the sensitive or serious nature of the topic being addressed.

5.2 Attitudinals as an ingroup vs attitudinals as an outgroup

As noted in Table 2, attitudinals (AT) as an outgroup (OG) are used in Sánchez's 2016 speech in 20 percent of cases. By employing the attitudinal marker *I want* (see example 5 below), Sánchez emphasizes his personal agency and determination, framing the decision as a deliberate and autonomous choice. This not only fortifies his position of control but also casts his resignation in a positive light. Additionally, by announcing his resignation from his position as a deputy, Sánchez subtly positions his current role as part of an outgroup from which he is intentionally distancing himself. However, he immediately mitigates any potential negative perceptions by framing this departure as a *new beginning* and a *new journey* as a grassroots

member, aimed at effecting change in the upcoming Congress. This optimistic perspective diminishes the impact of his resignation, suggesting it is not an end but rather a strategic move toward future political engagement and reform.

- (5) *quiero* [AT] anunciaros mi renuncia [OG] al acta de diputado. No es un adiós a la política, es un nuevo comienzo como militante de base, una nueva andadura que tiene como objetivo cambiar en el próximo Congreso. (*I want* [AT] to announce my resignation [OG] from my seat as a deputy. This is not a farewell to politics, but a new beginning as a grassroots activist, a new journey aimed at making changes in the next Congress) (Sánchez's 2016 speech).

This assumption can be further affirmed by noting that Sánchez not only positions his own political party as an outgroup, portraying it as the affected party compelled to resign, but he simultaneously frames the opposing party led by Rajoy in a negative light, thus reinforcing the outgroup perspective from two distinct viewpoints. By doing so, Sánchez strategically amplifies the notion of the outgroup, both in relation to his own party's internal struggles and in his depiction of the opposition. This dual application of the outgroup concept relates with Eller et al.'s (2015) notion of counternormative behavior. This duality serves to create a complex narrative where the outgroup is both a victim and a threat, depending on the perspective from which it is viewed.

Sánchez employs the attitudinal marker *I wish* (see example 6 below) to articulate a desire for a President who commands respect and is free from corruption, irrespective of party affiliation. This expression of longing implicitly critiques the current state of affairs by suggesting that the incumbent President, Mariano Rajoy, does not fulfill these standards. Sánchez's own presentation as part of an outgroup, compelled to resign, is further emphasized when he asserts *no quiero dejar de expresar cuán dolorosa es la decisión que tomo* (*I do not want to fail to express how painful the decision I have made is*). This sentiment is sustained by the lexical choice of *painful*, which carries a negative connotation. This expression highlights his profound regret and implicit reluctance to resign, suggesting that the decision is being made under duress. This creates an implicature, suggesting that Rajoy and his party are associated with corruption and lack the dignity expected of a President.

Curiously enough, Sánchez's 2016 speech utilizes the attitudinal markers *I want* and *I wish* with distinct rhetorical purposes that highlight different aspects of his communication strategy. When Sánchez declares, *I want to announce my resignation as a deputy. It is not a farewell to politics, but a new beginning as a grassroots member, a new journey aimed at changing things in the next Congress*, he uses *I want* to express a personal and emotional commitment, framing his resignation as a constructive and hopeful transition. This approach seeks to engage the audience's emotions, portraying his departure as a positive step towards future reform and fostering support through pathos.⁸ This can be further supported with example 8 below where Sánchez employs precise language to present himself with the ingroup, emphasizing his belief (e.g., *I am convinced*) in the efficacy of the democratic process within the party and implies that his resignation serves as a catalyst for positive transformation, fostering unity and encouraging grassroots involvement. In contrast, his use of *I wish* in *I wish for my country to have a President who is a figure worthy of respect beyond the party to which they belong, free from any suspicion of corruption. This is not the case with Mariano Rajoy* serves to articulate a principled vision of leadership, positioning himself against Rajoy by emphasizing a deeper ethical aspiration for integrity and respect. This use of *I wish* supports

⁸ For further details, see Padilla-Herrada (2015).

Sánchez's credibility and moral stance, positioning him with higher standards of leadership and focusing on ethos.⁹ The use of these rhetorical strategies from a different approach showcases how Sánchez strategically employs these markers to address different needs.

- (6) *Anhelo* [AT] para mi país que su presidente sea una figura digna de respeto más allá del partido al que pertenezca, libre de toda sospecha de corrupción [OG]. No es este el caso de Mariano Rajoy. (*I wish* [AT] for my country to have a President who is a figure worthy of respect beyond the party they belong to, free from any suspicion of corruption [OG]. This is not the case with Mariano Rajoy) (Sánchez's 2016 speech).

This previous use of attitudinals to position an outgroup can be further established with attitudinals that position an ingroup (IG) within the same period (i.e., 2016) (see example 7 below). Sánchez, in this case, utilizes the attitudinal markers *I wish* and *I want* to present his resignation in a positive and collaborative manner. By employing these terms, he presents himself with the values and aspirations of his audience and potential supporters, implying that his actions are not solely self-serving but are intended to benefit the collective good. By asserting *I want to make it clear that I have a different vision of politics*, Sánchez communicates his dedication to an alternative, presumably more constructive approach to politics. Additionally, his assertion *democracy should increasingly be nourished by new ways of citizen participation* implies that his resignation represents a move towards enhancing citizen involvement and invigorating democratic practices (as also noted in example 8 below). This viewpoint frames his action as a valuable contribution to the political process, resonating with those who prioritize democratic participation and ethical governance.

- (7) Con mi renuncia al acta *deseo* [AT] contribuir a dar a la política un sentido de fidelidad a la palabra dada, y un sentido del compromiso [IG] que vaya más allá de la conveniencia personal. *Quiero* [AT] dejar constancia de que tengo otra visión de la política, y de que considero que la democracia se debe nutrir [IG] cada vez más, de nuevas maneras de participación ciudadana. (With my resignation from office, *I wish* [AT] to contribute to giving politics a sense of fidelity to one's word and a sense of commitment [IG] that goes beyond personal convenience. *I want* [AT] to make it clear that I have a different vision of politics and that I believe democracy should increasingly be nourished [IG] by new ways of citizen participation) (Sánchez's 2016 speech).

In Sánchez's discourse, the use of expressions like *I want* and *I wish* introduces ambiguity by simultaneously serving personal and collective purposes. This ambiguity arises because these phrases navigate between outgroup and ingroup perspectives. For instance, in Example 5, *I want to announce my resignation* emphasizes a personal decision, identifying with an outgroup perspective as Sánchez distances himself from the current political situation. Conversely, in Example 6, *I wish for my country to have a President worthy of respect* critiques the opposition, framing them as an outgroup while expressing a desire that resonates with the public's collective interests. Lastly, in Example 7, the phrases *I want* and *I wish* are used to convey personal ethical aspirations, yet they are framed as part of a broader collective responsibility to uphold democratic values, thus blending personal and public interests. This creates a type of ambiguity¹⁰ where the boundary between personal accountability and collective responsibility becomes blurred, making it difficult for the audience to discern Sánchez's true intentions and positioning.

⁹ see Mshvenieradze (2013).

¹⁰ see, for instance, Kellas et al. (1988); Borowsky & Masson (1996); Rodd et al. (1999, 2018, 2000); Olsen (2017); Martin (2018); Maciejewski & Klepousniotou (2020); Nasr (2022).

Despite being intended to reassure supporters and highlight his continued commitment to the party, Sánchez's strategy carries inherent risks. Beyond the duality of individual versus collective commitment—which, as noted, contributes to ambiguity—his decision to resign during a period of difficulty could be perceived negatively by some voters. This action might be interpreted as an abandonment of responsibility, signaling an unwillingness or inability to confront and resolve the challenges at hand. Such a perception could portray him as a weak and easily discouraged leader, one who chooses to retreat rather than persevere through adversity. This dual perception—where his resignation is presented as a calculated move for the greater good while simultaneously risking being seen as evasive—demonstrates the complexity of his position.

- (8) *Mi voluntad* [AT] es hacer lo mejor para la organización [IG], que en estos momentos pasa por momentos difíciles [...] *Estoy convencido* [AT] de que no habrá mejor manera de unir al PSOE que uniendo las voces de la militancia con su voto en unas primarias [IG] y con la celebración de un debate sincero y constructivo en el próximo Congreso (*My intention* [AT] is to do the best for the organization [IG], which is currently going through difficult times. *I am convinced* [AT] that the best way to unite the PSOE is by aligning the voices of the membership with their votes in the primaries [IG] and by holding a sincere and constructive debate at the upcoming Congress) (Sánchez's 2016 speech).

In Sánchez's 2024 speech, amidst his attempt to resign due to his wife's alleged involvement in a corruption scandal, he ultimately chose to step back from resignation. During this period, his use of attitudinal markers as part of the ingroup is evident (see example 9 below). By doing so, he underlines his intention to transparently share his decisions with the audience and the head of state. This example emphasizes his steadfast commitment to tirelessly and resolutely work towards the necessary regeneration of democracy and the advancement and consolidation of rights and freedoms, reinforcing his stance with the values and aspirations of his audience.

This observation further accentuates the previously noted ambiguity in Sánchez's discourse and the evolution of his communicative practices. In his 2016 speech, Sánchez opted to resign, despite expressing an interest in a potential future return. This decision may have contributed to perceptions of him as a weak candidate unable to confront the challenges he faced. In contrast, his discourse in the 2024 speech appears more decisive and assertive, reflecting a stronger demeanor in addressing the issues prevalent during that period. The apparent contradiction and evolution in his behavior between these two periods can be attributed to the differing contexts in which he found himself. In 2016, as a candidate, his decisions lacked the authority and immediate impact that come with incumbency, potentially leading to frustration and a sense of incapacity to fulfill his aspirations. However, by 2024, as the sitting president, his decisions are taken with greater seriousness and carry a more direct and immediate effect, which may elucidate the evolution of his discourse.

Sánchez utilizes the attitudinal markers *want* and *take upon* to convey a profound sense of inclusivity and shared purpose with his audience. By stating, *I want to share with all of you*, he signals his intent to be transparent and open, thereby inviting his audience to actively participate in his decision-making process. This approach fosters a connection with his listeners, positioning them as integral to his narrative and actions. In his 2024 speech, Sánchez indicates both his personal dedication and his openness to public scrutiny. The phrase *take upon* further sustains this commitment by highlighting his willingness to assume personal responsibility. By declaring, *I take upon myself, before you, my commitment*, Sánchez emphasizes his determination to work diligently in addressing democratic needs and advancing rights and freedoms. This framing presents his commitment as a collective endeavor shared

with his audience, thereby strengthening his position with the ingroup. This strategy stands with Blas-Arroyo's (2011) assertion that the persuasive potential of inclusivity lies in fostering a sense of shared complicity between the speaker and the audience. Such a linguistic approach can be highly persuasive, as it creates a comfortable atmosphere where listeners feel connected and engaged, thereby enhancing the speaker's influence over the audience.

- (9) *Quiero [AT] compartir con todos ustedes lo que finalmente he decidido [IG]. De ello he informado previamente al jefe del Estado esta misma mañana. (I want [AT] to share with all of you what I have ultimately decided [IG]. I have informed the Head of State about it earlier this morning) (Sánchez's 2024 speech).*

5.3 Further observations

As observed in the analysis of the two speeches delivered by Sánchez during different periods when he attempted to resign—first in 2016 as the president of the PSOE party and then in 2024 as the President of Spain—the research questions can be addressed by noting that the rhetorical and linguistic strategies employed by Sánchez differ markedly between these periods. The functions of these rhetorical strategies appear to vary depending on the contextual issues at hand. It can be posited that as a mere member of the PSOE, Sánchez's obligations are less significant and less impactful. During the 2016 resignation, he stepped down because Rajoy was elected president despite having minority support, and Rajoy's party was implicated in a corruption scandal. Therefore, Sánchez's position seems more optimistic.

However, in 2024, Sánchez's stance and decisions carry significantly more weight, as he is not merely a candidate of a party but the President of Spain. In this context, he finds himself in a situation akin to Rajoy's in 2016, who was embroiled in the Gürtel scandal, a corruption issue involving the PP party. In Sánchez's case, his wife is allegedly involved in a corruption scandal, which compounds the seriousness of his position. As will be further discussed below, his rhetorical stance appears to diverge from his earlier optimism, shifting from a more individualistic approach to a collectivist one, possibly to mitigate direct accountability. This shift likely reflects the more serious and radical nature of the 2024 situation, which has the potential to adversely affect him, his family, and his political party.

As evidenced in the 2016 examples, Sánchez utilizes attitudinal markers (e.g., *I want/I wish*) to emphasize his personal intentions and vision for political change (e.g., *I want to make it clear that I have a different vision of politics*). Sánchez, in this way, highlights his individual stance and aspirations. In these instances, Sánchez focuses primarily on his personal commitment and vision, reflecting a more individualistic approach to communicating his decisions and viewpoints. This use of attitudinal markers emphasizes his own perspective and intentions, potentially excluding other stakeholders' interests and prioritizing his own narrative and goals. The emphasis is on presenting his personal vision and decision-making process as central to the discourse, which can be seen as a means of asserting his leadership and personal commitment without necessarily integrating the perspectives or concerns of others.

It is frequently assumed that the syndrome of individualism manifests as coherently at the individual level as it does at the national level (Gustavsson, 2007). This notion can be partially applied to Sánchez's 2016 speech, where his individualistic stance appears to extend beyond his personal viewpoint to also reflect the broader national sentiment (e.g., *Your commitment and participation will make the recovery and reconstruction of the PSOE possible*). In his address, Sánchez seems to suggest that the Spaniards who support his party conform with his perspective, implicitly endorsing his decision to resign. This approach frames

his resignation not merely as a personal choice but as one that resonates with and is understood by his supporters, thereby intertwining his individual actions with the collective will of the nation.

Sánchez's individualistic stance in his 2016 speech may lead to a fallacious interpretation, often rooted in ecological fallacies¹¹. Such fallacies occur when personal viewpoints are incorrectly assumed to represent the broader collective sentiment, despite lacking sufficient evidence. This is particularly evident in Sánchez's suggestion that his resignation reflects the will of his supporters and the wider Spanish public, without concrete validation of this collective concurrence. Additionally, Sánchez's critique of Rajoy's potential election due to alleged corruption—despite facing similar allegations himself in 2024, notably regarding his wife's presumed involvement in corruption—exemplifies an *ad hominem* fallacy¹². This fallacy occurs when an argument is undermined through personal attacks or circumstances rather than engaging with the substantive issues at hand. Sánchez's selective focus on corruption thus appears to serve his personal interests rather than reflecting a consistent ethical stance, thereby underscoring the problematic nature of his argumentation.

Sánchez's 2024 speech appears to shift towards a more inclusive and collective framing by involving others as part of the communicative process (e.g., *I want to share with all of you what I have ultimately decided*), Sánchez implicitly creates a sense of shared responsibility and accountability. This approach correlates with Marin Arrese's (2011a, 2011b) use of intersubjective explicit markers *we*, which can enhance engagement and foster a sense of inclusion among the audience. Given the gravity of the situation in 2024, where Sánchez faces scrutiny due to his wife's alleged corruption and his position as president, this strategic move to present his decisions as shared with the audience and other key figures is likely aimed at reinforcing transparency and accountability. It serves to position his actions within a broader context of collective responsibility and engagement, thereby mitigating potential criticisms and fostering a sense of joint commitment to addressing the issues at hand. This shift in strategy reflects a nuanced adaptation to the seriousness of the issue, aiming to strengthen his position by demonstrating a collaborative approach.

Sánchez's discourse strategically employs intersubjective explicitness by invoking reasons that resonate with universal values (e.g., *reasons that everyone can understand and relate to because they align with core values of a supportive and familial society like Spain's*) such as those inherent in a supportive and familial society like Spain's. By framing his motivations as universally comprehensible and relatable, Sánchez seeks to foster a shared sense of understanding and empathy among his audience. He emphasizes that his personal decisions are not merely individualistic but are deeply reflective of broader societal principles, thereby creating common ground with his listeners. This approach is designed to strengthen the connection between Sánchez and his audience, underscoring that his actions are in harmony with widely held cultural norms and ideals. As Blas-Arroyo (2011) notes, the use of explicit intersubjective markers can assist speakers in distributing accountability and sharing responsibilities with their audience, thereby making the communicative event more inclusive. However, this strategy can also be seen as an attempt to engage others as part of the communicative event in a way that could be fallacious, specifically through an appeal to emotion (Wrisley, 2018) or bandwagon fallacy (Law, 2006), where the speaker assumes or implies that the majority's agreement with universal values validates his actions.

¹¹ see for instance, Jackman & Miller (1996); Green et al. (2005).

¹² see Barth & Marten (1977); Woods & Walton (1977).

This fallacious approach becomes more pronounced when comparing Sánchez's 2016 and 2024 speeches. In both periods, Sánchez seems to extend his appeal to shared values in an effort to integrate his personal actions with the collective ethos (Padilla-Herrada, 2015) of his audience. However, the 2024 discourse takes this extrapolation to a more radical level by portraying Spaniards as part of a closer familial unit, which can be interpreted as an attempt to intensify the emotional appeal (i.e., pathos) (Padilla-Herrada, 2015). Despite the use of fallacies in both speeches, the credibility of Sánchez's arguments is particularly undermined by the inconsistency in his evaluation of corruption. While he initiated a motion of no confidence against Rajoy in 2016 due to suspicions of corruption, in 2024, when similar suspicions surround his own political party and family ties, Sánchez fails to apply the same rigorous standard. This inconsistency reflects a double standard, wherein his evaluation of corruption is contingent on personal and political convenience, thereby weakening the overall credibility of his discourse.

6 Conclusions

This study has presented a critical discourse analysis of Sánchez's speeches during two distinct periods: his resignation in 2016 and his attempted resignation in 2024. Through this analysis, differences and/or similarities in his communicative practices have been observed. The findings highlight the importance of context, demonstrating that various factors such as the specific situation and the speaker's role (i.e., as a mere political candidate or as a President) significantly influence the manner in which discourse is constructed. Depending on these contextual elements, the discourse can qualitatively shift to present the speaker's message in a way that maximizes personal and political advantage in a given circumstance.

For this reason, critical discourse analysis is essential in uncovering how discourse shapes our perceptions and can manipulate or persuade the audience without our conscious awareness. This study reveals that Sánchez employed a more individualistic approach in 2016 and a more collectivist one in 2024. These findings warrant further discussion in that future research could incorporate additional speeches to provide a more comprehensive analysis of how Sánchez's discourse evolves, even within different contexts in 2024. The speech analyzed in this study addresses a societal and political response to a presumed corruption scandal. However, it would be intriguing to examine his discourse in other situations, such as his interactions with other political members in Parliament or his responses to inquiries from a jury in court.

Addressing this recent event, it is noteworthy that Sánchez declined to participate as a witness in his wife's court case (El Mundo, 2024), a decision legally permissible under the Spanish judicial system. However, this action may cast doubt on his commitment to combating corruption as the President. It would be compelling to analyze his discourse following this event to identify the linguistic strategies he employs, potentially to mitigate perceptions of his avoidance of judicial participation. Additionally, examining the reactions of other political parties to his decision would provide further insight into the broader political implications and the effectiveness of his rhetorical approach.

Beyond the inconsistency in Sánchez's stance regarding Rajoy's involvement in a corruption scandal, his position is further undermined by his severe critique of other political figures, such as his condemnation of the Madrid President Ayuso's brother for allegedly benefiting from a COVID-19 mask contract. Given Sánchez's previous criticisms and stringent

stance on corruption, it is imperative that he upholds the same principles and refrains from seeking to absolve himself while retaining his position of power. This inconsistency in his discourse necessitates further investigation to explore how such contradictions are constructed when Sánchez is simultaneously a critic and a subject of criticism. Analyzing this dynamic would offer valuable insights into his rhetorical strategies and the mechanisms he employs to navigate and justify these apparent contradictions.

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Appendix A

Pedro Sánchez's resignation letter

(29th Octobre 2016)

Dear Javier,
Dear members of the Management Committee,
Dear President of the Socialist Parliamentary Group,
Dear fellow deputies,

With these lines, I want to announce my resignation from my seat as a deputy. This is not a farewell to politics; but a new beginning as a grassroots activist, a new journey aimed at making changes in the next Congress. The mistaken course that, in the opinion of many socialists, the PSOE has taken under the leadership of the Management Committee.

You can probably guess the reasons for my resignation. I am in deep disagreement with facilitating the government of Mariano Rajoy. Like many socialists, I maintain my “no”, firm and clear. However, having been Secretary General of the PSOE entails an added responsibility, and I cannot go against a resolution approved by the Federal Committee, no matter how wrong I believe it to be.

Undoubtedly, with a minimal number of abstentions from deputies, the Management Committee could have avoided the rupture that will surely occur during the vote in the Parliamentary Group. That would be the way to make the decision to facilitate Rajoy's investiture as least heart-wrenching as possible for our organization.

There are more than enough reasons for the Management Committee to have chosen this path: the abstention is a break with our electoral commitment and goes against the political stance defended by the Federal Executive Committee elected by the members at the last Congress; more than 40% of the members of the Federal Committee voted against the abstention; hundreds of local assemblies have voluntarily convened to pass resolutions opposing to enable a PP government; and no consultation has been held with the party members, something that would have channeled the debate and fully legitimized the decision to be taken by the Management Committee.

As obvious as it seems to be, we must not forget that representative democracy means faithfully reflecting the will of those we represent. I am convinced that the majority of them, both members and voters, do not choose the PSOE in an election to support what they want to change. I cannot and must not forget the moral rot into which Mariano Rajoy has plunged the Spanish democracy. Rajoy has not only failed to take responsibility, as he showed by not resigning over the corruption cases affecting him, but the continuation of his policies will only bring impunity, more cutbacks, and inequality.

I wish for my country to have a President who is a figure worthy of respect beyond the party they belong to, free from any suspicion of corruption. This is not the case with Mariano Rajoy.

The unnecessary bloc voting by the Parliamentary Group means that, ironically, my resignation as a deputy is mandatory because I cannot reconcile my two commitments (electoral and party) while Mariano Rajoy will become in our democratic history, one of the candidates with the fewest votes against his investiture as President of the Government. Something is wrong when honest politicians are forced out, and someone tainted by the shadow of corruption is facilitated into the presidency.

With my resignation from office, I wish to contribute to giving politics a sense of fidelity to one's word and a sense of commitment that goes beyond personal convenience. I

want to make it clear that I have a different vision of politics and I believe democracy should increasingly be nourished by new ways of citizen participation.

I do not want to leave without expressing how painful this decision is for me. For weeks, I have had to reflect on the defense of different values and levels of responsibility. This has not been an easy decision, I assure you. For someone like me, who loves politics as a transformative force and believes in socialist values, there is no greater honor than being part of the Socialist Parliamentary Group in Congress. In my case, I have also had the privilege of leading it for more than two years. All in all, you will understand, I cannot break my commitment to the millions of voters who placed their trust in the PSOE in the last general elections. I cannot betray my word; it would be to betray myself.

I cannot fail the millions of true-hearted socialists, with or without a membership card, who trusted me and proudly walked the path of saying “no means no” to Mariano Rajoy. Those who say that “no” can never be a political project are right. Precisely because we have a political project that says “yes” to the values of social democracy, we say “no” to Rajoy. A project that stands for integrity, fairness, and social justice.

Through this letter, I want to thank all the deputies of the Parliamentary Group. It has been an honor to share the journey and the work with you. I apologize for any mistakes I may have made. I explicitly ask the Management Committee not to choose the path of expelling from the Group or our organization those who vote against Rajoy’s investiture. Even less so should we break our alliance with our sister party, the PSC. That decision would be a serious mistake, and in case of being made, it should only be done within the framework of a Federal Congress. If that is your intention, I announce my opposition to it and my defense of the current relationship between the PSOE and the PSC. No one should be left out! Only the shared leadership of the PSOE and the PSC can build a federal solution to the crisis in Catalonia!

We are facing an exceptional situation. The votes against Rajoy’s investiture will be the expression of the majority feeling of our voters and members. If the members of the Management Committee allow this free expression, it would show your true will to prioritize the organization’s broader interests. If you hesitate, remember that the Rules of the Congress of Deputies and the Spanish Constitution recognize the right to vote according to one’s conscience. If after reading them you still have doubts, I hope my resignation from my seat as deputy serves to stop what would be a serious mistake that would further distance the Socialist Party from progressive citizens.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members for their constant and selfless work, which brings the ideals of socialism to every street and square in Spain. Your commitment and participation are what lend credibility to the socialist project. Your commitment and participation will make the recovery and reconstruction of the PSOE possible.

I will conclude.

With my resignation from Parliament, I am not leaving politics, I am starting again in it, as just another grassroots member. A member who will defend their rights. The right to the immediate convening of a party Congress once a government is formed in Spain (as approved by the Federal Committee), and the right for my voice and vote to count (along with all the membership) thanks to the holding of primaries to elect our new General Secretary. The right to reclaim a PSOE open to the XXI century, like the one I humbly tried to build during these two years leading the organization.

The primaries cannot have been a mere illusion that allowed an unknown deputy to win the trust of the membership, something for which I will never be sufficiently grateful. Being your General Secretary has allowed me to spend over two years on the road, feeling the heartbeat of our organization: the grassroots. Thank you for generously sharing with me your concerns, hopes, convictions, and the values that make our organization great, some values that have always been committed to social justice, equality, and respect for the diversity and plurality of every corner of our country

I wouldn't be sincere if I said that this time at the head of the party didn't have moments of doubt, sadness, or helplessness. But every word of encouragement and gratitude you gave me was reason enough to keep fighting for what we believe in, for what we think our country should be.

My commitment to the members remains intact. My commitment to the PSOE is, if anything, even stronger, because difficulties have never been an excuse for me not to keep the path of our ideals.

I have intended for this resignation to be as humble as possible, just as the announcement of my candidacy for General Secretary was. My intention is to do the best for the organization, which is currently going through difficult times. That's why this step aside is meant not to deepen the wounds that threaten us, avoiding overreactions and sterile debates. I remain at the service of the membership and their legitimate representatives in each and every institutional sphere. Whoever wants to fight to recover a PSOE that is autonomous and distinct from the PP, a PSOE that is united and fraternal; whoever wants to strengthen a PSOE where the grassroots members decide, will have me by their side.

I am convinced that the best way to unite the PSOE is by aligning together the voices of the membership with their votes in the primaries, and by holding a sincere and constructive debate at the upcoming Congress. I encourage you all to do so. And I also encourage our members not to abandon our beloved organization. Looking ahead to the next Congress, let's work together to recover and rebuild the PSOE. I will be there.

Sincerely,

Pedro Sánchez

Appendix B

Institutional Statement by the President of the Government (29th April 2024)

As you know, last Wednesday I wrote a letter addressed to all citizens. I asked whether it was worth enduring the harassment that my family has suffered for the past ten years in exchange for serving as the President of the Government of Spain.

Today, after these days of reflection, I have a clear answer. If we, as a society, accept that political action allows for the indiscriminate attack on innocent people, then it is not worth it.

If we allow partisan conflict to justify the exercise of hatred, slander and falsehood towards third parties, then it is not worth it.

If we permit the most outrageous lies to replace respectful and rational debate based on evidence, then it is not worth it.

No matter how great the honor is, it cannot justify the unjust suffering of the people one loves and respects the most, watching as others attempt to destroy their dignity without the slightest basis.

As I told you, I needed to pause and reflect on all of this. And I know that the letter I sent may have been disconcerting, because it does not follow any political calculation. And that's true. I am aware that I've expressed a feeling that is not usually acceptable in politics. I have admitted in front of those who seek to break me, not because of who I am, but because of what I represent; that it hurts to live through this situation that I would wish on no one.

Also, because whatever our job or professional responsibilities might be, we live in a society that only teaches us and demands that we keep the pace at all costs. But there are times that the only way to move forward is to stop, reflect, and decide clearly which path we want to take.

I have acted out from a clear conviction. Either we say enough, or this degradation of public life will determine our future, condemning us as a country. It's true that I have taken this step for personal reasons, but these are reasons that everyone can understand and relate to because they align to core values of a supportive and familial society like Spain's.

Because this is not an ideological issue. We are talking about respect, dignity, principles that go far beyond political opinions and that define us as a society. This does not have anything to do with the legitimate debate between political options. It has to do with the rules of the game.

If we allow deliberate fake news to steer the political debate, if we force the victims of those lies to prove their innocence contrary to the most basic principle of our rule of law. If we allow women to be pushed back into the domestic environment sacrificing their professional careers for the sake of their husbands'. If, ultimately, we allow irrationality to become routine, the consequence will be irreparable damage to our democracy.

To demand unconditional resilience to leaders targeted by such a strategy is to place the focus on the victims, not on the aggressors. And confusing freedom of expression with freedom to defame is a democratic perversion with disastrous consequences.

Therefore, the question is simple: Is this what we want for Spain? My wife and I know that this smear campaign won't stop. We have been enduring it for ten years. It's serious, but it's not the most relevant. We can handle it. What truly matters, what is truly significant, is that we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the outpouring of

solidarity and empathy we've received from all sectors of society. Logically, allow me a special word of thanks to my beloved Socialist Party.

In any case, thanks to that social mobilization which has played a decisive role in my reflection and for which I am again grateful, I want to share with all of you what I have ultimately decided. I have informed the Head of State about it earlier this morning. I have decided to continue and continue with even greater strength, if possible, at the helm of the Presidency of the Government of Spain.

This decision does not suppose a mere pause; it is a turning point. I assure you of that. That is why I make this public commitment before you to work tirelessly, with determination and with composure for the overdue renewal of our democracy, and for the advancement and consolidation of rights and freedoms.

I take on the decision to remain in office with more strength than ever, if possible, at the helm of the Presidency of the Government of Spain. There is only one way to reverse this situation: that the social majority, as they have done over the past five days, have been mobilized in a clear stand for dignity and common sense, putting an end to the politics of shame that we've endured for far too long, because this is not about the fate of one particular leader. That is secondary. This is about deciding what kind of society we want to be. And I believe our country needs to undertake this collective reflection.

In fact, over these past five days, we've already begun doing so. A collective reflection that opens the door to clean politics, to renewal, to fair play. We have allowed the political arena to be colonized by the mud for far too long, with public life contaminated by toxic practices that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

I therefore appeal to the collective conscience of Spanish society. A society that, through generous agreements, overcame the terrible and deep wounds of the darkest parts of its past. A society that has successfully met every democratic challenge it has faced in an exemplary manner, that overcame successfully a pandemic, and that despite the difficult geopolitical context we face, with wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, is currently enjoying a strong economic moment and experiencing social peace.

A society that amazed the world with their enthusiastic embrace of rights and freedoms, passing from a dark past into an international benchmark for liberty and democracy, for progress and coexistence. Today, I ask the Spanish society to once again be an example, an inspiration for a confused and wounded world. Because the ills that afflict us are by no means exclusive to Spain. They are part of a global reactionary movement that seeks to impose its regressive agenda through defamation and falsehoods, through hatred and appeals to fears and threats that have no basis in science or rationality. Let us show the world how democracy is defended.

Let us put an end to this mire in the only way possible: through a collective, calm, democratic rejection, beyond party lines and ideologies, which I commit myself to firmly lead as President of the Government of Spain.

Thank you.