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The discourse of President Pedro Sánchez during the State of Alarm in Spain

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# The discourse of President Pedro Sánchez during the State of Alarm in Spain

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## Abstract

This work aims to analyze Pedro Sánchez's discourse during the State of Alarm in Spain. The objective of the research is to establish relationships between the linguistic levels and the strategic functions proposed by Chilton and Schäffner (1997) in order to interpret the linguistic choices in the President's discourse at one of the most important moments in the country's history.

Keywords: Political Discourse, Strategic Functions, Linguistic Levels

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## 1. Introduction

In recent months, the world has been affected by a global health crisis with a greater impact in some countries than in others. The appearance of the COVID-19 virus (Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2) has changed, to a greater or lesser extent, the way of life in the affected societies. In Spain, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is especially intense, so in March 2020 the government decided to declare the State of Alarm throughout the country. This situation allows the government to take actions or impose policies that it would not normally be allowed to carry out and leads citizens to a state of confinement. For this Pedro Sánchez, President of the Government of Spain addresses the Spanish people on several occasions in order to explain the new situation and announce the measures to be taken. On 03/13/2020 Pedro Sánchez informs citizens that the next day he will meet with the Council of Ministers to declare a state of alarm in Spain. The next day the president officially announces the start of the state of alarm, originally planned for the next fifteen days. However, several extensions follow until the end of the state of alarm on 06/21/2020, which gives rise to the beginning of the so-called 'new normality', in which citizens still do not have complete freedom of movement. Now, what is said and how is it said in this political discourse by the President?

The objective of this work is to analyze Pedro Sánchez's discourse during the state of alarm due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain. After a first approach to the concept of discourse and its kinds of analysis, we will concentrate with special emphasis on political discourse due to its relevance in our investigation. As a basis for our analysis, we take the methodological proposal of Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner (1997), which aims to interpret the linguistic choices of the speaker in relation to strategic functions and linguistic levels. We will carry out our study on the president's

discourse by reviewing his speeches over a period of more than three months, that is, during the state of alarm. In this way, we will examine the linguistic resources and the discursive strategies used by the President when it comes to addressing citizens at a crucial moment in the history of Spain.

## 2. About *discourse* and its analysis

### 2.1 *Discourse*

The study of discourse responds to a plurality of approaches and an interrelation of disciplines. It is not easy to make a unique definition since as Norman Fairclough points out "Discourse is a difficult concept, largely because there are so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints" (Fairclough 1992: 3). According to the linguist Covadonga López Alonso, the notion of discourse dates back to the Greek philosophical tradition of 'logos' as the ability to use language and from its origins, therefore, this term has been applied to the use of language as a social practice (López Alonso 2014: 13). A more specific definition is provided by the dictionary of the Real Academia Española (DRAE) and the Oxford English Dictionary (OED):

**discurso**. Del lat. *discursus*.

5. m. Razonamiento o exposición de cierta amplitud sobre algún tema, que se lee o pronuncia en público

(Reasoning or exposition of a certain breadth on a topic, which is read or pronounced in public)

**discourse**, n.

3.a. A more or less formal treatment of a subject, in speech or writing, in which it is considered or discussed at length; a treatise, dissertation, homily, or he like; a disquisition.

In both definitions there are certain similarities with respect to speech in the oral or written field. As far as linguistics is concerned, 'discourse' is used frequently

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to refer to extended samples of either spoken or written language (Fairclough 1992: 3). However, there are differences between the forms of speech and writing, and consequently between written and spoken language. Gillian Brown and George Yule consider it important to clarify what it means to represent 'a text'. For this, they propose to use text "as a technical term, to refer to the verbal record of a communicative act" (Brown/Yule 1983: 5-6). And they also add in this regard:

In summary, the discourse analyst treats his data as the record (text) of a dynamic process in which language was used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker / writer to express meanings and achieve intentions (discourse) (Brown/Yule 1983: 26).

Therefore and according to Fairclough, the text can be considered here as a dimension of discourse, that is, as the written or spoken product of the text production process. (Fairclough 1992: 3). Ruth Wodak agrees with this statement by saying that discourse is defined on a different, more abstract, level as text. Thus "Discourse implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures whereas a text is a specific and unique realization of a discourse" (Wodak 2008: 6).

## 2.2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis as a discipline is consolidated in the sixties of the last century and its main objective is the study of the contextualized use of language in all areas of human activity (López Alonso 2014: 13). While the 1960s brought with it several scattered attempts to apply semiotic or linguistic methods to the study of communicative texts and events, in the early 1970s the first monographs and collections were published that dealt fully and explicitly with systematic discourse analysis as an independent orientation of research within and across disciplines (van Dijk 1985: 4) As early as the 1980s, the term 'discourse analysis' was used with a wide range of meanings covering a wide range of activities (Brown/Yule 1983: viii). This same trend continued in later years:

The term discourse analysis has in recent decades penetrated many disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy, history, literary studies, cultural studies, anthropology, psychology and linguistics. In all these disciplines the term carries distinct meanings, including a social science methodology the label for a whole field, a subdiscipline of linguistics, a critical paradigm and so forth (Wodak 2008: 4).

In this sense, the position of specialists in discourse analysis as a theoretical discipline has changed over the years (López Alonso 2014: 20). Brown and Yule take a fundamentally linguistic approach to discourse analysis. They draw on contributions from all interdisciplinary areas, but their primary interest is "the traditional concern of the descriptive linguist, to give an account of how forms of language are used in communication" (Brown/Yule 1983: ix). Later Ruth Wodak points out

that "discourse is mainly understood as linguistic action, be it written, visual or oral communication, verbal or nonverbal, undertaken by social actors in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions" (Wodak 2008: 5). In the same way, Teun A. van Dijk affirms that "Discourse is not only analysed as an autonomous 'verbal' object but also as situated interaction, as a social practice, or as a type of communication in a social, cultural, historical or political situation" (van Dijk 2008: 3).

## 2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

In relation to what has just been exposed so far, it is important to note that as the development of discourse analysis has evolved and the point of view of some experts has acquired an even more critical view. Among others, the studies of Teun A. van Dijk stand out:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality. This is also why CDA may be characterized as a social movement of political committed discourse analysis (van Dijk 2015: 466).

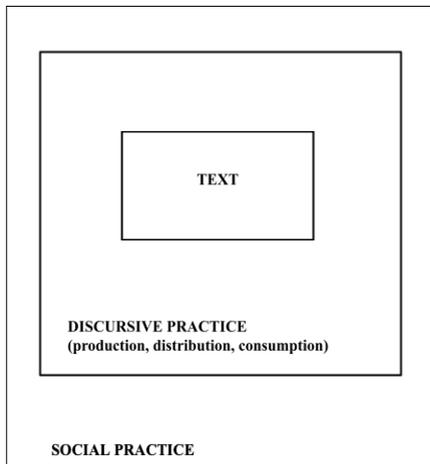
Previously, Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer had referred to this aspect claiming that the goal of CDA is not to investigate a linguistic unit per se, but to study social phenomena that are necessarily complex and, consequently, require a multidisciplinary and multi-method approach (Wodak/Meyer 2009: 2). Furthermore, there is a general belief that CDA is a special method for doing discourse analysis. This method does not exist as such, since in CDA it is possible to apply all the methods of the transversal discipline of discourse studies, as well as other relevant methods in the humanities and social sciences (van Dijk 2015: 466). Similarly, it must be emphasized that CDA has never been and has never attempted to be or provide a single or specific theory. Nor is it a specific methodology characteristic of CDA research (Wodak/Meyer 2009: 5). Discourse Analysis can be divided into two dimensions:

Language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the microlevel of the social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macrolevel. This means that CDA must bridge the well-known 'gap' between micro and macro approaches (van Dijk 2015: 468).

By accepting macro-categories such as power and class, the question arises as to how to relate them to the patterns that emerge in micro-analysis. In order to establish the relationship between micro-categories and macro-categories, Fairclough developed his 'social theory of discourse' (Matthiessen 2012: 447). The three-dimensional conception of discourse is represen-

ted diagrammatically in the following graph (Fairclough 1992: 73):

Figure 1: Representation of Fairclough's Three-dimensional conception of discourse



Three levels emerge from the diagram in relation to discourse (Fairclough 1992: 3):

- The TEXT dimension attends to language analysis of texts.
- The DISCURSIVE PRACTICE dimension, like 'interaction' in the 'text-and-interaction' view of discourse, specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation, for example which types of discourse (including 'discourses' in the more social-theoretical sense) are drawn upon and how they are combined.
- The SOCIAL PRACTICE dimension attends to issues of concern in social analysis such as the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constitutive/constructive effects of discourse.
- That is why in the analysis of a discourse, it is important not to take into account only the linguistic aspect, but also to carry it out in combination with a social perspective, especially in political discourse as we will see below.

#### 2.4 Discourse and Politics

In general, human beings communicate through language. In this regard, van Dijk points out that language users actively participate in text and talk not only as speakers, writers, listeners, or readers, but also as

members of social categories, groups, professions, organizations, communities, societies, or cultures (van Dijk 1997a: 3). Historically, languages consist of discourses and are not simply a socially or politically neutral resource. One of these discourses is political discourse (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 221). Politics could hardly take place without language, and the use of language in the constitution of social groups is likely to lead to what we call 'politics' in a broad sense (Ibid.: 206). The notion of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) is therefore ambiguous. Interpretation of PDA tends to focus on the analysis of 'political discourse', although this requires determining which discourse is political and which is not. On the other hand, a more critical reading of PDA is also possible, such as a political approach to discourse and discourse analysis, for example, in the way understood in contemporary Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk 1997b: 11).

Van Dijk raises the question of what exactly 'political discourse' is, and answers in a simple way, claiming that political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, that is, politicians (Ibid.: 12). Politicians can be considered as the group of people who carry out paid political activities and who are elected or self-proclaimed as central actors in politics. However, politicians are not the only participants in the domain of politics. From an interactional perspective of discourse analysis, political communication events should also include the different recipients, such as the public, the people, the citizens, the 'masses' and other groups or categories. Thus "once we locate politics and its discourses in the public sphere, many more participants in political communication appear on the stage" (Ibid.: 13).

Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner also address the definition of 'political' and the relationship between the actors and recipients that are part of the political discourse and its analysis. They propose the following observation in this regard, "The task of political discourse analysis is to relate the fine grain of linguistics behavior to what we understand by 'politics' or 'political behavior'" (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 211). On the one hand, they consider as potentially 'political' those actions, linguistic or not, that involve power and its opposite, resistance. On the other hand, they relate political situations and processes with discursive types and levels of discourse organization through an intermediate category called strategic functions. These strategic functions allow discourse analysts to ignore the playful, informative, etc., functions of discourse and focus on the elements that contribute to events sensed as political. From the strategic functions proposed by the authors we have chosen the following that we can later apply to our own analysis:

- **Coercion:** Clear examples are speech acts backed by sanctions (legal and physical): commands, laws, edicts, etc. Less obvious forms of coerced behavior consist of speech roles which people find difficult to evade or

may not even notice, such as spontaneously giving answers to questions, responding to request, etc. Political actors also often act coercively through discourse in setting agendas and positioning the self and others in specific relationships, making assumptions about realities that hearers are obliged to at least temporarily accept in order to process the text or talk. Power can also be exercised through controlling others' use of language – that is, through various kinds and degrees of censorship and access control.

- **Dissimulation:** Political control involves the control of information, which is by definition a matter of discourse control. It may be quantitative or qualitative. Secrecy is the strategy of preventing people receiving information; it is the inverse of censorship, which is the preventing of people giving information. In another mode of dissimulation, information may be given, but be quantitatively inadequate to the needs or interests of hearers ('being economical with the truth', as a British politicians put it). Qualitative dissimulation is simply lying, in its most extreme manifestation, but includes various kinds of verbal evasion and denial ('I am not opposed to benefits, but...'), or the omission of reference to actors. Euphemism has the cognitive effect of conceptually 'blurring' or 'defocusing' unwanted referents, be they objects or actions. Implicit meanings of various types also constitute a means of diverting attention from troublesome referents.
- **Legitimization and Delegitimization:** Political actors, whether individuals or groups, cannot act by physical force alone – except in the extreme case, where it is questionable that one is still in the realm of what is understood by 'politics'. This function is closely linked to coercion, because it establishes the right to be obeyed, that is, 'legitimacy'. Why do people obey regimes that are very different in their policies? Reasons for being obeyed have to be communicated linguistically, whether by overt statement or by implication. The techniques used include arguments about voters' wants, general ideological principles, charismatic leadership projection, boasting about performance, and positive self-presentation. Delegitimization is the essential counterpart: others (foreigners, 'enemies within', institutional opposition, unofficial opposition) have to be presented negatively, and the techniques include the use of ideas of difference and boundaries, and speech acts of blaming, accusing, insulting etc. (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 212-213).

At this point, it must be taken into account that in lin-

king the strategic functions with the linguistic analysis of texts and conversations, the different levels and aspects of language must be taken into account. To complete the analysis it is necessary to extend it to the following linguistic levels (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 214):

- **Pragmatics:** interaction amongst speakers and hearers
- **Syntax:** the internal organization of sentences
- **Semantics:** meaning, structure of lexicon

Based on this theoretical approach that we have just shown, that is, the analysis of political discourse through the combination of strategic functions and linguistic levels, we now present in more detail our analysis of President Pedro Sánchez's discourse during the State of Alarm in Spain.

### 3. Analysis of the discourse of President Pedro Sánchez during the State of Alarm in Spain

In order to carry out a suitable political analysis, it is helpful to think about how strategies are carried out by choice of language. We should not be concerned with the text structure, the syntax or the lexicon themselves, but only in so far as they are the means by which the speaker and listener create complex and different meanings in the interaction. This entails an interest in wordings and phrasings by being able to give them meanings in accordance with our background knowledge and values. And at the same time this implies that "political discourse analysis, despite the importance of precise and rigorous linguistic description, is an activity in which the analyst is engaged" (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 213-214).

Different forms of text and conversation correspond to different discursive distinctions. Assumed that what is 'political' depends on the participants, societies generally have institutionalized discourses that are communicated through various types of texts and forms of speech that can be analyzed from two perspectives. The first group is about 'metapolitical discourse' and includes texts on political ideas, beliefs and practices of a society or part of it. The second group is made up of texts to promote the emergence to a political or ideological community or group, or party. Within this second group, various types of discourses can be distinguished: inner-state (domestic) discourse and inter-state (foreign policy and diplomacy) discourse; internal-political discourse (politicians talking, planning, deciding, etc. among themselves) and external-political discourses (politicians communicating with the public) (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 214). This approach can be complemented with the idea proposed by van Dijk who maintains that "Discourse manifests or expresses, and at the same time shapes, the many relevant properties of the sociocultural situation we call its context" (van Dijk 1997a: 4). The communicative situation would be made up of categories such as setting (time,

place) or ongoing actions (discourses and discourse genres). Participants in various communicative, social or institutional roles and identities would also be included, as well as their goals, knowledge, opinions, attitudes and ideologies (van Dijk 2015: 470-471). It is evident that politicians speak politically when they and their speech are contextualized in such communicative events as cabinet meetings, parliamentary sessions, election campaigns, rallies, media interviews, bureaucratic practices, protest demonstrations, etc. (van Dijk 1997b: 14).

In this sense and according to the analysis of the political discourse provided for in this work, we first want to provide some data related to its contextualization. Based on the above information, we can speak of an external political discourse, since it is a speech delivered by the President of Spain addressing the nation, that is, a politician communicating with the public. And within this type of political speech, we can speak of a presidential discourse, a speech coming from a central figure in society, the person elected to preside over the government (Montero 2009: 351). Regarding his person, Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón was born in Madrid in 1972. He belongs to the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) and has been Prime Minister of Spain since June 2018. About the form of Government, Spain is a parliamentary monarchy. And of course it is also appropriate to mention the concept of 'State of Alarm' that the president defined in this new context in his own words:

El Estado de Alarma es un instrumento de nuestro Estado de Derecho, recogido por nuestra Constitución, para enfrentar crisis tan extraordinarias como la que desgraciadamente está sufriendo el mundo y también nuestro país. La emergencia sanitaria y social generada por el coronavirus conocido como COVID 19, crea circunstancias como las que la Ley contempla para dotar al Gobierno de España de recursos legales, también, extraordinarios (T1: 2).

(The State of Alarm is an instrument of our State of Law, included in our Constitution, to face such extraordinary crises as the one that unfortunately the world and our country are suffering. The health and social emergency generated by the coronavirus known as COVID 19, creates circumstances such as those contemplated in the Law to provide the Government of Spain with legal resources, also extraordinary).

The 'State of Alarm' is actually a situation that allows the government to take actions or impose policies that it would not normally be allowed to carry out. A state of confinement is declared and affects directly the way of life of citizens. People may only circulate on public roads to carry out activities such as acquisition of food or to go to health centers as well as financial institutions. It is therefore striking that a democratic country like Spain makes use of it. For this reason, it is interesting to analyze the President Pedro Sánchez's dis-

course during this period, as it will be carried out in the following section. The classification of this speech called T1 and the rest of the President's speeches will be explained in the following section.

### 3.1 Methodology

As just indicated in the previous section, the present work aims to analyze the political discourse of President Pedro Sánchez during the state of alarm in Spain due to the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus (Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2). The corpus is made up of the transcripts of the nine speeches addressed to Spanish people and broadcast on various audio visual media. The data can be seen in the table below (see Figure 2):

Figure 2. Speeches by President Pedro Sánchez during the State of Alarm

Reference	Topic	Date
T1	Communication on the State of Alarm in Spain	13.03.2020
T2	Declaration of the State of Alarm in Spain	14.03.2020
T3	First extension	22.03.2020
T4	Second extension	04.04.2020
T5	Third extension	18.04.2020
T6	Fourth extension	02.05.2020
T7	Fifth extension	16.05.2020
T8	Sixth extension	31.05.2020
T9	End of the State of Alarm in Spain	20.06.2020

Reference means each of the speeches, so T1 is Text 1, also the first speech with the topic *Communication on the 'State of Alarm'* and the date. This first speech was delivered a day before the start of the state of alarm to inform about the president's intention to meet the next day with all the ministers and agree on the new situation in the country. The second speech with reference T2 is about the Declaration of the state of alarm in Spain. Then there are six extensions of the state of alarm. The first five extensions (T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7) have duration of fifteen days each. According to article 116 of the Spanish Constitution, the state of alarm will be declared by the Government by means of a decree agreed in the Council of Ministers for a maximum period of fifteen days. An extension of the state of alarm can only be authorized by the Congress of Deputies (Congreso de los Diputados) (<https://app.congreso.es/consti/constitucion/indice/titulos/articulos.jsp?ini=108&fin=116&tipo=2>). The last extension (T8) is an exception and lasts for approximately one month. The last speech (T9) is about the end of the state of alarm in Spain. Both the speeches and the transcripts are available on the official website of the Palace of Moncloa (Palacio de la Moncloa), official residence and workplace of the Prime Minister of Spain. A list with the access links is in the 'References' section at the end of this work.

The objective of our study is to analyze and interpret

the linguistic choices of the speaker, the President Pedro Sánchez. That is, in which ways the speaker's language choices can be interpreted in terms of his politically strategic functions, given a general political culture and a particular political context. For this we take as a basis the methodological proposal of Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner exposed above (see cap. 2.4). Thus, our study aims to link *strategic functions* with linguistic levels in the President's discourse through the analysis of concrete examples presented in their original version in Spanish and with their corresponding translation into English in each case. In total there are twelve examples listed between parentheses.

### 3.2 Pragmatics

From a perspective of language as action, the Conversation Analysis (CA) has demonstrated the subtlety of the management of talk (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 215). From city-states to large modern states, the organization of political 'conversation' defines the nature of polity. It is possible to observe that the linguistic details of speech are far from being accidental. On the contrary they are finely structured and are functional in the management of social and, therefore, potentially political relationships (Ibid.: 216). In this context, the notion of speech acts is important, because it occupies a central place in the analysis of political discourse, since it ends with the conception of language and action as separate entities. Clifton and Schäffner propose the following classification of speech acts according to Searle (1976) and that is very relevant to political discourse:

- **Declaratives** (proclaiming a constitution, announcing an election, declaring war)
- **Directives** (commands, requests)
- **Commissives** (promises, threats)
- **Expressives** (praising, blaming)
- **Representatives** (truth claims)

As we have just mentioned, in our analysis we took this classification as a basis, although we expanded it according to the original text by Searle (1976). The following is a selection of examples chosen for our analysis.

(1)

**Comparezco** para dar cuenta del Consejo de Ministros extraordinario en el que **hemos aprobado** *el ya, el anunciado Estado de Alarma y las medidas que este implica para hacer frente al coronavirus, al COVID-19 (T2: 2).*

**(I) appear** to give an account of the extraordinary Council of Ministers in which **(we) have approved** the already, the announced State of Alarm and the measures that this implies to face the coronavirus, COVID-19.

Originally these types of speech acts are referred to as *Declarations* by Searle. This is the class of cases in which one brings into existence a state of affairs by declaring that it exists, cases in which, so to speak, 'saying makes it so'. For instance, if someone successfully performs the act of declaring a state of war, then the war is on (Searle 1976: 13). This can also be observed at the beginning of the sentence '**(Yo) Comparezco [(I) Appear]**'. In general, in Spanish the personal pronoun, in this case '**Yo [(I)]**', is usually omitted, since the verb in its ending '**-o (Comparezco)**' carries with it the mark of the first person singular. By establishing the leader-led and speaker-listeners relationships, the first person pronoun '**I**' places the speaker as the subject of special verbs, which belong to the semantic field of saying, feeling and action. That is, they place the speaker as the truthful narrator and man of action (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 217). Pedro Sánchez uses this mechanism to position himself as a trusted person when addressing the Spanish people. Within the same sentence, the President makes use of another pronoun '**(nosotros) hemos aprobado [(we) have approved]**'. The use of '**nosotros [we]**' refers to the Council of Ministers. As in the previous case, we find another case of omission of the personal pronoun, '**nosotros [we]**', which is implicit in the ending of the verb **-mos** of the auxiliary verb **haber [to have]** in its inflection '**hemos**'. The speaker intends to show that he was not alone in his decision and that it is the product of a collective understanding that certain actions are correct through *internal consensus* (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 217). We can see then that the pronouns have a special function in the production of a social and political 'space' in which the speaker, the audience and the others are 'positioned'. Only in this speech (T2) on 03/14/20, the frequency of appearance of the pronouns is: '**yo [I]** 23 and '**nosotros [we]** 55. However, mastery of the rules that constitute the linguistic competence of the speaker and the hearer is usually not sufficient for the execution of a statement. Furthermore, there must be an extra-linguistic institution in which the speaker and listener occupy special places (Searle 1976: 14). And the institutions require that the acts be dictated by authorities of various kinds that have declaratory force (Searle 1976: 15). We can then consider our first example as a clear case of declarative speech act carried out together with the strategies of *legitimization* and *coercion*. As we have just seen, the speaker declares the state of alarm in the country from a unilateral position applying a strategy of coercion. Through his speech, he positions himself and others in a specific situation by acting in a coercive way. The government has the power to declare the state of alarm and the powerless must accept this decision. The decision is made by the President in consensus with the Council of Ministers, which legitimizes the speaker in his action to lead the country to a situation that is unusual in a democratic country.

(2)

*Como presidente del Gobierno, os pido vuestra*

*colaboración: sé que la tengo, a la vez que frenamos la curva de contagios, cortemos la cadena de transmisión del pánico. Paremos los bulos y especulaciones, fake news, con información contrastada. Actuemos con responsabilidad, disciplina social y sentido de comunidad. Sé que somos capaces de hacerlo unidos (T2: 9-10).*

As President of the Government, **(I) ask for** your collaboration: I know I have it, while we stop the contagion curve, **let's cut** the chain of transmission of panic. Let's stop hoaxes and speculations, fake news, with proven information. **Let's act** with responsibility, social discipline and a sense of community. I know that we can do it together.

Directive speech acts can be seen as attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. These can be modest attempts like when I invite you to do it or suggest that you do, but they can also be more intense attempts like when I insist on you doing it. Some of the verbs included in this class are ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, and also invite, permit, and advise (Searle 1976: 11). Therefore, the request '**os pido**' **[(I) ask for]** responds to a directive speech act and legitimization strategy. The speaker addresses the hearer in an informal way in order to raise closeness with the public, and thus legitimize their request. On the other hand, it is also possible the existence of indirect speech acts that can lead immediate listeners to think that some form of action or behavior change is required of them. In English, "Let's" is used to form the first person plural of the imperative in suggestions, requests, proposals or orders (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 220). In Sánchez's speech we find this formula in the following verbs of the same example: '**cortemos; Paremos; Actuemos**' [**let's cut; Let's stop; Let's act**]. Again the closeness of the speaker is observed, including himself as part of the group and thus legitimizing his position. It is also a mental process and is not subject to any kind of order. The speech act in question could be called 'urging' and is characteristic of leaders.

**(3)**

*Este Gobierno tiene el compromiso de erradicar la pobreza que conlleva como principal prioridad erradicar la pobreza infantil, y dar cumplimiento, en consecuencia, a las recomendaciones que, cada año, desde el año 2014, nos hace el Consejo de Europa a España (T8: 6).*

This Government is **committed** to eradicating poverty, which entails eradicating child poverty as its main priority, and consequently to comply with the recommendations that the Council of Europe makes to Spain every year since 2014.

Commissive speech acts are those acts whose objective is to engage the speaker with some future course of action. The difference between directive and commissive acts is that, while the goal of a request is to try to get the listener to do something, the goal of a promise

is to commit the speaker to do something (Searle 1976: 11-12). The explicit commissives (promises, threats, offers) are usually made with great caution by politicians, although it is true that politicians will try to show that they are making them. These promises are idiomatically recognized as 'empty' (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 220). In our example (3), President Sánchez refers to child poverty in a commissive speech act with an empty promise that can be used in any other context. In his speech it is also possible to identify the strategic function of *dissimulation*, which allows politicians to have quantitative or qualitative control of information. Information can be given in a quantitatively inadequate way in order to 'economize on the truth' (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 212). The intent of a commitment is likely to be reassuring, but recognizing the sentence as a cliché, it may not be convincing. Indeed, it is not convincing, in such a way that even after the end of the state of alarm, no measures have been taken to protect children, as reflected in the Save the Children's report from July 2020. From the study carried out, it can be deduced that during the state of alarm in Spain, the children were totally confined for 40 days. The impact of the situation has been most serious on children living in more vulnerable households. They warn Public Administrations that if the appropriate measures are not taken, children may also be the most affected by the impact of the economic crisis as a result of the health crisis. And they warn that it is essential to propose measures to ensure that this pandemic does not irreversibly mark the rest of the lives of the most vulnerable children (Save the Children 2020: 2).

**(4)**

*Por eso, como presidente del Gobierno quiero volver a dar las gracias: Gracias [...] a los profesionales sanitarios [...] a las Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad del Estado [...] a los trabajadores [...] a los profesores [...] a la cultura [...] a los deportistas [...] a los profesionales de la comunicación [...] a los científicos [...] a los pequeños [...] a los jóvenes [...] a los mayores [...] a las mujeres (T9: 5-6).*

For this reason, as Prime Minister (I) want to thank again: Thank you [...] to the health professionals [...] to the State Security Forces [...] to the workers [...] to the teachers [...] to culture [...] to athletes [...] to communication professionals [...] to scientists [...] to youngsters [...] to young people [...] to the elderly [...] to women.

Expressive speech acts express the psychological state specified in the condition of sincerity about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content. The paradigms of expressive verbs are 'thank', 'congratulate', 'apologize', 'condole', 'deplore', and 'welcome' [...] The truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed (Searle 1976: 12). In example (4), the President thanks different social groups for their good behavior during the state of alarm. One of the most prominent general political acts is that of *legitimation*, although it may not

be considered as a speech act in the strict sense, but rather a complex social act or process (van Dijk 1997b: 37). In this last speech (T9) just before the end of the state of alarm, the speaker uses the word *gracias* (thank you) up to a total of 30 times. Through gratitude, he tries to *legitimize* a long period of confinement for citizens with reduced freedom of movement and himself as an act of *self-legitimizing*.

(5)

*[...] nuestros compatriotas han dado una respuesta ejemplar, nunca me cansaré de decirlo, ejemplar, en esta situación extrema, cumpliendo cada cual con su misión desde su puesto de trabajo o desde el confinamiento en el hogar; los españoles son los ciudadanos occidentales que con más rigor han cumplido las limitaciones a la movilidad (T5: 2-3).*

[...] our compatriots have given an exemplary response, I will never tire of saying it, exemplary, in this extreme situation, each one fulfilling his mission from his job or from confinement at home; Spanish people are the Western citizens who have most rigorously complied with mobility limitations.

This example is also an expressive speech act in which the president praises the performance of the Spanish people for their good behavior during the state of alarm. Actually a dissimulation function is hidden because the speaker is not telling the whole truth. At no time is reference made to the possible consequences derived from non-compliance with the state of alarm by citizens, such as penalties of between 100 and 600,000 euros or even jail terms of up to one year, as indicated by the police website (CCPM 2020). According to the president, what we do, lock ourselves in our homes, is a democratic, rational decision, which is designed not to limit our freedom, but to preserve the first of our assets, our lives (T3: 8). What the speaker shows in his speech can be considered as an attempt to present the state of alarm as a sign of democracy. However, confinement is not a situation voluntarily chosen by the citizens, but a mandatory imposition by a democratic government to deprive the freedom of the people.

(6)

*Por eso mi primer pensamiento y mis primeras palabras [...] son [...] también de profundo consuelo a los familiares y amigos de quienes desgraciadamente hayan perdido la vida sin que hayamos podido darles el último adiós [...] Son ya 11.744 vidas arrebatadas (T4: 2).*

That is why my first thought and my first words [...] are [...] also of deep consolation to the relatives and friends of those who have unfortunately lost their lives without us being able to say goodbye [...] There are already 11,744 lives taken.

(7)

*Antes de comenzar esta alocución, permítanme que traslade mi pesar [...] a todos los familiares de los compatriotas que en las últimas horas han perdido la vida (T7: 2)*

[...] recordemos a las 27.561 personas, compatriotas, a los que la enfermedad ha arrancado de entre nosotros (T7: 10).

Before starting this speech, allow me to convey my condolences [...] to all the relatives of the compatriots who have lost their lives in the last hours [...] let us remember the 27,561 people, compatriots, whom the disease has torn from among us.

The examples (6) and (7) are also included within expressive speech acts. In both cases, the speaker expresses to the families his condolences for the victims of the COVID-19 virus. In this way, he seeks to legitimize his position as president of the government, showing respect to the relatives of the deceased compatriots. However, it should be noted that the first allusion in this regard takes place during the fourth speech (T4) with already 11,744 victims, a high number. It is during the seventh speech (T7) that he again mentions the victims and their families, but it is not until the end of it that he gives the death toll, 27,561 people. The final figure of 'more than 28,000 victims', an unspecified figure, is provided in the last speech (T9: 1). Thus a notable increase in the number of victims of the Coronavirus is observed during the state of alarm. The condolences of the president can be seen here as an alternative to divert attention to the real problems of the country. Despite suffering the strict and harsh rules of confinement, the mismanagement of the pandemic by the government is not capable of providing a properly functioning health system, and as a consequence the number of infections and victims of the COVID-19 virus continues increasing day by day. The question then arises whether such a strict confinement and depriving citizens of their liberty for so long is really necessary.

### 3.3 Semantics

Language vocabularies can be seen as constructions of the real that reflect the interests of a linguistic community or perhaps the interests of the dominant groups in a community. Likewise, languages are historically constructed from discourses and are not simply a politically or socially neutral resource. In political discourse the metaphor represents a crucial conceptual and semantic mechanism in the production of political meanings (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 221). According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *metaphor* is for most people a device of the poetic imagination, a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. For them, on the contrary, metaphor is very present in everyday life, not only in language, but in thought and action. Our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, such that how we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is largely a matter of metaphor (Lakoff/

Johnson 1980: 3). As Chilton and Schäffner point out, a common metaphor in political discourse is *argument of war* (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 222).

The metaphor *argument of war* can also be analyzed in the discourse of President Pedro Sánchez. In the following tables we see the frequency of use from some words related to topic 'war' in the various speeches of the president:

Figure 3a. Frequency of use of some words related to topic 'war'.  
Nouns

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	Total
batalla (battle)		3	3			2		1		9
combate (combat)	1		1	1	1				1	5
guerra (war)			1	3	2			1		7
resistencia (resistance)				5	2				1	8
victoria (victory)	1	5	1	7	1	1	1		3	20

Figure 3b. Frequency of use of some words related to topic 'war'.  
Verbs

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	Total
atacar (to attack)			1						1	2
batir (to beat)				1		1				2
combatir (to combat)	2	2	1	1		2	2	1		11
doblegar (to vanquish)		1		8	1	1	1	1	1	14
luchar (to fight)			3	2			1			6

All the words in both tables are either directly related or can be interpreted figuratively with the lexical field of 'war'. The number of occurrences of the verbs in table 3b has been calculated with the verb both in the infinitive and in the conjugate. The speaker includes these words in his speeches on the topic of the pandemic to a greater or lesser extent. This may be because as national languages become elaborate in their functions, different fields of activity such as the government develop their own vocabularies which can often be described in terms of structured 'lexical fields' and "are related to cognitive 'schemata' or 'scripts', which are knowledge bases about objects and activities" (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 221).

In table 3a we observe the use by the speaker of various nouns. On the one hand, the speaker alternates the use of '**batalla**' [battle] and '**combate**' [combat] against the virus or disease. The nouns '**resistencia**' [resistance] and '**victoria**' [victory] also appear in this warlike context of the speech and on repeated occasions even within the same phrase, because according to the speaker the virus can only be defeated 'con sacrificio, resistencia y moral de victoria' [with sacrifice, resistance and moral victory]. A characteristic aspect of presidential speeches is the use of phrases and lexemes that attract the attention of listeners, that are repeatable and easy to remember in such a way that this iteration is a continuous reminder and even penetrates the private sphere through its use in everyday life (Montero 2009: 351). As table 3b shows this same

strategy is also used with verbs, among which the use of '**doblegar**' [to vanquish] stands out in examples such as '**hay que dobligar la curva de propagación del coronavirus**' [we must vanquish the curve of the spread of the coronavirus] or '**hemos conseguido dobligar la curva de propagación del virus**' [we have managed to vanquish the virus propagation curve]. Although the truth is that we do not have to vanquish a pandemic but rather survive it. On this use of the metaphor argument is war in the discourse on the pandemic caused by the COVID 19 virus, we see below some more examples.

(8)

La **guerra** contra el coronavirus es permanente (T3: 3).

The **war** on coronavirus is permanent.

In the presidential discourse, the conditions of political speech are highlighted, as it aims to persuade, mobilize audiences and produce emotions, both negative and positive (Montero 2009: 351). This can be applied to example (8), since naming the word '**war**' can trigger mixed feelings in listeners. In this case, the speaker names the term '**guerra** del coronavirus' [coronavirus war] and at the same time uses the *dissimulation* function as a strategy in a qualitative way in its most extreme manifestation, that is, *lying*. There is no war but a global pandemic and as the philosopher Santiago Alba Rico in an interview with the journalist Alejandro Torrus from the digital newspaper *Público* suggests, speaking

in terms of war is dangerous and inappropriate for a government like this (Torrús 2020).

(9)

*Porque ahora estamos ante nuestro **verdadero enemigo**, que es el virus y la pandemia. Es un **enemigo** de todos y todos debemos combatirlo unidos (T2: 9).*

Because now we are facing our real **enemy**, that is the virus and the pandemic. He is an **enemy** of everyone and we must all fight him together.

As in any war, an enemy is needed. In this case, the president's strategy can be interpreted as an attempt to divert attention to just one focus, the virus as the real enemy. With this, he intends to avoid possible criticism of the management of the pandemic and tries to achieve a national union against a single common enemy, the virus, as can also be seen in the following example.

(10)

*Pero nos tenemos a **nosotros mismos como sociedad** [...] nuestra única opción es la victoria completa sobre el virus [...] Quien se crea al margen de la situación y pretenda seguir con su vida con normalidad, debe ser consciente de que se comporta como un **aliado del virus** y no como su vacuna. Quienes difunden consejos contrarios a la autoridad científica, son también un **aliado del virus** (T3: 5-6).*

But (we) have **ourselves as a society** [...] our only option is complete victory over the virus. Whoever believes himself outside the situation and intends to continue with his life normally must be aware that he behaves as an **ally of the virus** and not as its vaccine. Those who spread advice contrary to scientific authority are also an **ally of the virus**.

In this case the speaker has the intention to express an opposition. On the one hand we can consider the *Legitimization* function in '**nosotros mismos como sociedad**' [**ourselves as a society**]. The reference to 'nosotros' (we) with the implicit sense of 'I, the President and you, the people' seeks to legitimize the figure of the speaker like a charismatic leader. His position alongside citizens implies the intention to represent the same identity as a united nation, as soldiers against the pandemic. On the other hand we can speak of the *Delegitimization* function. With '**aliado del virus**' (**ally of the virus**) the speaker means 'los otros' (the others), that is, the people who are not on the side of the government. It could be considered like a division of the people into two sides, the heroes and the enemies in this fictional war. Thus Alba Rico warns that there is no enemy here, not even the virus. The virus can only be treated as an enemy within a metaphor, because outside of it, it is dangerous business (Torrús 2020).

3.4 Syntax

Less obvious and more subtle than lexical style is the political manipulation of syntactic style, such as the use of pronouns, variations of word order, active and passive constructions, and other ways of expressing meanings underlying sentence structures (van Dijk 1997b: 33). Let's look at the following two examples.

(11)

*Por eso, **quiero comunicarles** cinco nuevas órdenes y una decisión en respuesta a la crisis sanitaria, como continuación a las numerosas que ya se han aprobado: **les anuncio**, [...] En segundo lugar, y de conformidad a lo acordado entre los países miembros de la UE en el Consejo Europeo para frenar la expansión del COVID-19, **vamos a aplicar una restricción temporal** de todos aquellos viajes que no sean imprescindibles y que se realicen desde terceros países (T3: 3).*

For this reason, **(I) want to communicate to you** five new orders and a decision in response to the health crisis, as a continuation of the many that have already been approved: **(I) announce**, [...] Second, and in accordance with what was agreed between the EU member countries in the European Council to stop the spread of COVID-19, **(we) are going to apply a temporary restriction** of all those trips that are not essential and that are made from third countries.

(12)

*Un sector clave para nuestra economía es, sin duda, el turismo. Y es el más afectado por las **restricciones sociales que ha impuesto la propia pandemia** (T8: 8).*

A key sector for our economy is undoubtedly tourism. And it is the most affected by the social **restrictions imposed by the pandemic itself**.

Both examples (11) and (12) have the same speaker, the President Pedro Sánchez, and the same topic: '**restricción**' [**restriction**] and '**restricciones**' [**restrictions**]. But there are syntactic and discursive differences in the way the speaker expresses himself. In the analysis of political discourse, the aspect of *thematic roles* is relevant within the organization of the sentence. The thematic roles are related to who (*agent*) is doing what (*processes* of moving, affecting, causing) to whom (*patient*), where (*location*), why (*cause, purpose*) and by what means (*instrument*). The way the speaker assigns these roles can be interpretively linked to certain representations of the political universe (Chilton/Schäffner 1997: 223). At the beginning of example (11) we can see that the speaker addresses his audience twice in first person '**(Yo) quiero comunicarles**' [**I want to communicate to you**] and '**(Yo) les anuncio**' [**I announce**]. But later he uses '**(nosotros) vamos a aplicar**' [**we are going to apply**] to report a '**restricción**' on unnecessary travel. He probably is doing this because he doesn't want to take responsibility alone.

The mention of the EU (European Union) as an important institution reinforces the *legitimizing* function of this decision. In example (12) changes the situation. The subject of the sentences is not a person. In the second part, the sentence is no longer constructed in an active voice but in a passive voice. Passive sentences allow omitting the explicit reference to the agent. In the formulation of the sentence it can be understood implicitly that 'the pandemic' is the agent of its own actions, is a kind of personification and should be responsible for the restrictions, not the government, which is not true. The speaker tries to evade direct responsibility for the events and avoid a *delegitimizing strategic function* that falls on the pandemic itself, since the real actors are omitted through the use of the *dissimulation function*.

#### 4. Conclusion

This work has been carried out with the objective of knowing the linguistic choices of President Pedro Sánchez in his discourse during the state of alarm in Spain. Through the analysis of some pragmatic, semantic and syntactic choices of the text above, it is possible to establish the conceptual world constructed in the text, as well as the relationships between the speaker and others that are established during the actual enunciation of the text. At a conceptual level, the analysis of the relationships between linguistic levels and strategic functions can indicate the way in which a political actor expresses the ideological themes and assumptions chosen for its statement at a given historical moment. At an interactive level, we can also infer what positions and relationships can take place between the speaker and the others during the emission of the speech, that is, between the President and the Spanish people.

One of the ways to express the ideology of the speaker in our text is reflected in the linguistic level of pragmatics with the emission of concrete speech acts. Example (1) is a declarative speech act to announce the declaration of the state of alarm presented as necessary and even as a democratic sign, but in reality it carries an implicit strategic function of coercion with the consequent imposition of a confinement of the population for several weeks. Frequently the use of pronouns and special verbs has the specific function to position the speaker and the audience. The use of the omitted personal pronoun and the conjugated verb in example (1) '(Yo) Comparezco' [(I) Appear] allow the speaker to establish the leader-led relationship and place the speaker as the truthful narrator and man of action. In the commissive speech act in example (3) the speaker makes a promise in the form of a cliché phrase that can be used in any other context and is actually void of content. We find also expressive speech acts like example (4) and (5) where the president thanks different social groups for their good behavior during the state of alarm. With this gratitude, the speaker tries to legitimize a long period of confinement and the restriction of citizen liberty. What he does not reveal in his speech, however, are the negative consequences of not complying with the rules set by the government,

such as possible economic sanctions or even prison terms. In the same way examples (6) and (7) show Pedro Sánchez's condolences to the families with victims of the COVID-19 virus. With his words he tries to legitimize his role as president of the government together with the citizens, although it can be ambiguous due to the increase in victims as the days go by.

This type of analysis can also be found at the linguistic level of semantics with the use of words and expressions related to the metaphor argument of war as examples (8), (9) y (10) show. By stating that the world is in a war against the coronavirus, the speaker sets in motion the mechanism of the dissimulation function as a strategy to express something that is not true and present the virus as the enemy. And just as if it were a war context, a social division into two groups takes place. With his discursive communication Pedro Sánchez positions the citizens next to him or against him through the legitimization of 'nosotros' (we) with the implicit sense of 'I, the President and you, the people' and the delegitimization of 'los otros' (the others), the allies of the virus. However, the COVID-19 virus is not an enemy and there is no war. It is simply a virus and the government should try to find a solution within scientific research and meanwhile protect all citizens from its effects, even those who disagree with government decisions.

Likewise, Pedro Sánchez's syntactic choices allow us to analyze his discourse at the conceptual and interactional levels. As we have seen previously, examples (11) and (12) show differences in the president's discursive practices throughout the state of alarm. In order to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus, at the beginning of the state of alarm the president announces a series of measures taken by the government, including a temporary restriction on unnecessary travel, a restriction that directly affects tourism, a very important sector in the Spanish economy. Syntactically it is a sentence that presents the president and the government as active subjects of it. A few weeks later, Sánchez refers again to social restrictions, but now the sentence is constructed in a passive voice and the subject is not a person, but the pandemic itself. We can then speak here of a political strategy that aims to find the person in charge outside the government with the aim that citizens look more outward than inward and focus their attention on the common enemy, on the Coronavirus. At the same time, the discursive communication of the speaker also carries the strategic functions of legitimizing the president and delegitimizing the COVID-19 virus.

Our analysis of President Pedro Sánchez's discourse has allowed us to interpretively link linguistic details at the levels of pragmatics, semantics, and syntax with the strategic functions of coercion, dissimulation, legitimation, and delegitimization. From the results obtained in the analysis, we can conclude that these strategies are put into practice by the speaker through their linguistic choices. On an interactive level we can also deduce which positions and relationships can take place between the speaker and the others during the transmission of the speech. In this way, critical discourse

analysis makes it possible to study the dynamics of power in society and analyze how that power is exercised and reproduced through the various uses of language.

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