

## Metacognitive Expressions in *La Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, a Seventeenth-Century Text by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

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IN THE *Respuesta de la poetisa a la muy ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz*, her famous letter/treatise, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648/51–1695) eloquently defends her right to study, learn, write poetry, and pursue academic matters.<sup>1</sup> In this document, Sor Juana repeatedly refers to her intellectual activities as arising from an innate desire in her. This “desire to know,” that she “knows not whether to take as a Heaven-sent favor or as a punishment,”<sup>2</sup> was indeed a recurrent theme in her mental explorations. Sor Juana’s *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* constitutes an extraordinary example of an early essay-like letter, a biographical narration, and a legal treatise representing “a unique document in the history of Hispanic literature.”<sup>3</sup> Its uniqueness results not so much from its rhetorical style and format as from the themes developed, their treatment, and the subjective, reflective nature of Sor Juana’s prose, particularly as part of Hispanic literature, a literature

<sup>1</sup>There is controversy about Sor Juana’s date of birth. Electa Arenal and Amanda Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta* (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1994). The *Respuesta* was written in 1691, as dated by Sor Juana. However, it was originally published nine years after it was composed (thus after Sor Juana’s death), in volume 3 of *Fama y Obras póstumas del Fénix de México, Décima Musa, Poetisa Americana, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Religiosa Profesa en el Convento de San Jerónimo de la imperial Ciudad de México* (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel Ruiz de Murga, 1700). See Sarah Poot Herrera, “Las Cartas de Sor Juana: Públicas y Privadas,” in *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y sus Contemporáneos*, ed. Margo Glantz (Cd. de México: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1998), 291–317. Even though some researchers believe that the *Respuesta* circulated in Mexico City among people in Sor Juana’s social network, the only published copy is the one in volume 3. The *Respuesta* was composed in response to the *Carta de Sor Filotea*, which prefaced Sor Juana’s *Carta Atenagórica* (Letter Worthy of Athena) published in Puebla in 1690, where she critically discusses a sermon published forty years earlier by Antonio de Viera (1608–97). Such publication, which she claims in the *Respuesta* was without her knowing and consent, was sponsored by the bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, who used the pseudonym of *Sor Filotea* to admonish Sor Juana and compel her to dedicate her talent to more spiritual matters.

<sup>2</sup>Translation to English by Arenal and Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta*. In Sor Juana’s words: “deseo de saber... que no se determinar si por prenda o castigo me dió el Cielo.”

<sup>3</sup>Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe* (Cd. de México:Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982).

where “reflections about the solitary adventures of the soul have been a neglected topic in the work of the great Hispanic writers.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, it has been said that “few documents of the seventeenth century embrace matters of learning, intellectual freedom, and power with such erudition and eloquence as does the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz*.”<sup>5</sup>

In the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana embarks on an exploration of concepts, arguments, and ideas that result, as in a mirror-image, in a profound reflection of her life as a scholar and an examination of her “Self” as a woman-nun facing a major crisis in her life.<sup>6</sup> This text is said to represent the height of the baroque epistolary style in New Spain and is an early example of the later Hispanic polemical essay.<sup>7</sup> It is also an example of a type of discourse and reasoning that, on the one hand, seems to contain signs of the innovative notions being developed in contemporary Europe regarding explanations of physical-mechanical phenomena, as well as explanations of concepts, such as matter, feelings, and mind.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, it also contains concepts and ideas concerning apprehension

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., my translation.

<sup>5</sup>Arenal and Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta*, vii.

<sup>6</sup>José J. Blanco comments that many researchers believe that the bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández, “used” Sor Juana to antagonize the archbishop of Mexico City, Francisco Aguiar y Seijas, his political enemy and an individual known for his fanatic religiousness and his misogynous ideas and attitudes. José J. Blanco, *Esplendores y Miserias de los Criollos: La Literatura en la Nueva España* (Cd. de México: Cal y Arena, 1989). Another possibility is that Fernández and Sor Juana were working together against Aguiar y Seijas, who was a friend of Antonio Vieyra, whose sermon Sor Juana critized in the *Carta Atenagórica*. The intention would have been, then, to humiliate the archbishop through Sor Juana’s critique of Vieyra, whether she participated in these events willingly or not, and whether she expected the consequences of these actions or not. For instance, that Sor Juana is eventually forced to “donate” her library and to stop writing.

<sup>7</sup>Arenal and Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta*, note that it is inaccurate to refer to the *Respuesta* in terms of the essay, since this genre was not part of the Hispanic literature around the time of Sor Juana’s life. However, they also remark that some of the rhetorical characteristics found in the *Respuesta* reflect a number of elements later developed in Hispanic essays.

<sup>8</sup>T. V. Smith and Marjorie Grene, in their review of philosophers *From Descartes to Locke* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940), note that the ideas about the physical world, such as those proposed by Newton (1642–1727), “effectively united contributions from reason and observation” (1). This fusion resulted in part from a division of the world into two parts: extended matter and cogitating mind, a concept expanded by Descartes (1596–1650). Such separation, Smith and Grene say, had numerous implications. One of them was the distinction between feelings (which are of the body) and ideas (which are of the mind). John Locke (1632–1704), on the other hand, differed in his conception of knowledge and ideas from those proposed by Descartes. What he does, according to Smith and Grene, “is to examine ideas with a view to discovering what part of our knowledge of the Cartesian world can really stand as knowledge thus defined (i.e., as a system of connected ideas having absolute validity in reference to as real world). After dispelling... the notion of ‘innate ideas,’ he enumerates... the kinds of simple ideas we get by sensation and reflection, and the complex ideas we form from them” (342). From the discussion of human understanding proposed by Locke in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), as well as from others like Hume and Berkeley, we arrive at our modern conceptions of mind and subjectivity. David R. Olson, *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

of knowledge that are no longer prevalent in many parts of seventeenth-century Europe.<sup>9</sup>

The study reported here examines Sor Juana's *Respuesta* in relation to subjective mental activities (e.g., reflecting, knowing, understanding) and their relationship to the "Self" (i.e., the writer's subjectivity, as expressed in written form). The analysis is conducted from a pragma-linguistic point of view; that is, it is concerned with Sor Juana's use of language, particularly those linguistic expressions used to refer to her "Self" and her own thinking and reasoning: her metacognitive language. Metacognitive expressions, in this study, refer to those expressions that comprise "the many ways we describe our own and others' mental states and mental processes."<sup>10</sup> In general, these many ways include terms to characterize thinking processes, acquisition or production of knowledge, formation of opinions, as well as the relationship of evidence to opinion, and various special modes or types of thinking, such as reflection, contemplation, planning and so forth.

My aim is to describe the ways by which Sor Juana linguistically expresses her thinking "Self" in written mode. This approach is taken in order to understand better the linguistic construction of the highly subjective nature of the *Respuesta*; in other words, the construction of what Lyons calls "the locutionary subjectivity" of a text.<sup>11</sup> As defined by Lyons, locutionary subjectivity is comprised of both the subjectivity of cognition, feeling, and perception and the subjectivity of action or agency. This type of subjectivity thus refers to an individual's locutionary expressions (i.e., what the speaker or writer intends to convey when producing a text) or, simply put, "self-expression in the use of language."<sup>12</sup> It is precisely the concept of self-expression that ties together the questions explored here: How does Sor Juana express her metacognitive, subjective "Self" in her writing? What expressions are called upon when referring to her own thinking and reflecting?

The study focuses on Sor Juana's use of verbal predicates as these are tied to the writer (herself) through self-referential markers. Therefore, this paper is not concerned with a literary analysis of Sor Juana's work or with an examination of the path she followed to reach her scholarly, literary

<sup>9</sup>Paz believes that Sor Juana was ignorant of the "intellectual revolution" taking place in Europe during the seventeenth century, particularly in topics related to physics and astronomy. In *Sor Juana*, he explains, "opposite beliefs co-existed: Christianity and feminism, religious faith and attraction to philosophy" (547).

<sup>10</sup>Shari Tishman and David Perkins, "The Language of Thinking," *Phi Delta Kappa* 78, no. 5 (1997): 369.

<sup>11</sup>John Lyons, "Subjecthood and Subjectivity," in *Subjecthood and Subjectivity: Proceedings of the Colloquium "The Status of the Subject in Linguistic Theory,"* ed. Marina Yaguello (London: OPHRYS and the Institut Francais du Royaume-Uni, 1994), 13.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

goals. Nor is it concerned with exploring Sor Juana's interactions—as an individual and as a poet-writer—within her social, political, and cultural environment. Numerous books, articles, research papers, and biographies are available which shed light onto these matters.<sup>13</sup> Rather, I concentrate on two types of linguistic resources used by Sor Juana to construct and express her thinking “Self”: verbal predicates and first-person pronouns, and how these linguistic elements are called upon in “talking” about her cognitive processes, her knowledge, her ideas, arguments, beliefs, opinions, and so forth.

The *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* is of particular importance since Sor Juana develops, in prose, a manuscript where a knowing, reasoning “Self” is both the subject and the object of the discussion. In addition, the fact that Sor Juana composed this text in the last decade of the seventeenth century enables us to study it in light of crucial changes regarding literary practices said to have taken place in Europe around this time. These changes have to do with the way writers related to their texts (i.e., how their subjective “Self” is represented), as well as to how mental activities were described and reported in written form.<sup>14</sup> Preliminary questions of the extent to which a well-known writer in the New World adopted the new conventions, and whether the *Respuesta* written by the famous Mexican nun was one of such “innovative texts,” provided the initial motivation for this study.

#### BACKGROUND

In the seventeenth century, a revolution of sorts took place in the Western world in terms of how language and written texts affected each other and how literacy practices were implemented. Olson points out that a “new” type of text emerged during the Renaissance, in part influenced by scientific progress, and in part due to new philosophical conceptions of thought and mind. This manifestation led to a “new awareness of language,” which resulted in a type of text in which writers were able to explicitly mark relationships between themselves and their ideas expressed in writing.<sup>15</sup> Writers started to express, linguistically, attitudes towards their ideas, using both speech act verbs, such as “affirm,” “argue,” “deny,” “state,” and mental verbs, such as “doubt,” “understand,” “consider,” and so forth. Furthermore, the recognition of mental states as such was instrumental in the definition of the concepts of “subjectivity” and “consciousness of

<sup>13</sup>Arenal and Powell's *The Answer / La Respuesta*, a bilingual publication of the *Respuesta*, includes a useful bibliography of scholarly works about Sor Juana, as well as editions of her works (recent and early editions) and translations of these.

<sup>14</sup>Olson, *The World on Paper*.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 162.

mind.” It is important to remember, Olson explains, that the conceptualization of the interplay of action, intention, belief, and desire is culturally dependent, linked, in particular, to literacy practices.

In seventeenth-century Mexico City, literacy practices were strictly regulated by the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church. As a nun who managed rhetorically to develop close connections with the Viceregal Court, Sor Juana deploys the rhetorical conventions prevalent among the privileged elite in her society, which, in turn, are a reflection of those favored in the Iberian peninsula. In addition, her writing is also part of common literacy practices associated with life in New Spain’s convents. Thus, Sor Juana is typical in that she was an educated nun with the means and time necessary to write while cloistered in a well-established, reputable convent.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, she is unique in that no other writer in New Spain, male or female, pursued so intensely and passionately a life of intellectual excellence. Moreover, she did so not through the traditional route of mystic and spiritual achievement,<sup>17</sup> but through Neoplatonic, scholastic (in the tradition known as Hermeneutics), and rationalistic perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Her work thus focuses on secular matters as much as it does on religious topics. During her lifetime, the publication of her poems and prose gave her fame and recognition.<sup>19</sup> However, such fame, her theological discussions, political connections and, last but not least, her condition

<sup>16</sup>In the New Spain, as in many other parts of the Colonial world, convents became a place where female writing flourished. In them, women found a viable alternative to marriage and were thus free of the usual obligations of married women. They could dedicate their free time to cultivating their own interests and, although cloistered, they were by no means disconnected from the outside world. In convents like the one Sor Juana chose, Saint Paula of the Jeronymite Order in Mexico City, the nuns’ cells were spacious two-story rooms where they were allowed to have slaves, servants, and *protegés* (Paz, *Sor Juana*).

<sup>17</sup>In convents, mysticism, theology, and knowledge merged into one in the fertile minds of the nuns, resulting in a particular type of feminine thought. Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau, “El convento colonial mexicano como recinto intelectual,” in *Conquista y Contraconquista: La Escritura del Nuevo Mundo*, ed. Julio Ortega and José Amor y Vázquez (Cd. de México: El Colegio de México, 1994), 279–88. Mystic visions were encouraged (see Alessandra Riccio, “La Autobiografía de la Madre Josefa de Castillo,” in *Conquista y Contraconquista*, ed. Ortega and Vázquez, 325–34), although strongly controlled by the nun’s confessors, who often confiscated and destroyed many of their manuscripts (typically their *Vidas*, or Lives). “The act itself of narrating mystic experiences” argue Arenal and Schlau, “represented a mental exercise.” (“El convento colonial mexicano como recinto intelectual,” 283, my translation). More importantly, they state, the fact that nuns were part of the dominant Catholic religion protected them from institutional forms of repressions; that is, any other woman who dared to act publicly and/or speak independently from male control could easily find herself questioned by the Inquisition.

<sup>18</sup>Paz, *Sor Juana*.

<sup>19</sup>The total number of the original editions of Sor Juana’s published volumes (1689–1725) are: 8 editions of volume 1, 6 editions of volume 2, and 5 editions of volume 3. All were published in Spain, except the second edition of volume 3, which was published in Portugal. Georgina Sabat-Rivers, “Editando a Sor Juana,” in *Conquista y Contraconquista*, ed. Ortega and Vázquez, 303–13.

as woman-writer and nun, all contributed to the attacks and harsh criticisms that she suffered towards the end of her life. Ironically, it was one of these attacks that resulted in her well-known and highly praised piece of prose, the *Respuesta de la poetisa a la ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz*.

#### THE STUDY

In order to analyze Sor Juana's metacognitive verbal expressions, I use a set of categories adapted from both Tishman and Perkins and Scholnick and Hall.<sup>20</sup> The language of thinking is divided by Tishman and Perkins into three major categories: terms that mark an epistemic stance, terms that describe an intellectual process, and terms that describe an intellectual product. Epistemic terms indicate a stance or attitude toward a claim to knowledge (e.g. "conclude," "believe," "confirm," "doubt," "know"), and their function is to characterize the relationship of thought to fact. Intellectual-process terms, on the other hand, characterize the process of thinking and express its flow, structure, and feel: utilizing verbs such as "analyze," "discern," "investigate," "examine," "contemplate," etc. Finally, intellectual-product terms are basically nouns that name and mark differences among kinds of ideas (e.g., "conclusion," "hypothesis," "option," "solution," "reason," "claim," "theory"). In addition, Tishman and Perkins comment that the language of thinking involves feelings and emotions, often described by terms such as "cognitive emotions."<sup>21</sup>

Scholnick and Hall, on the other hand, describe the language of thinking in terms of "internal-state" words, which are classified, based on Hall and Nagy, into four categories: cognition, affect, perception, and intentions and desires.<sup>22</sup> These categories are to be identified contextually, as they express a change in the speaker's internal state. In addition, such a classification is said to convey four pragmatic functions: (1) they may encode indirect speech acts, (2) they may conventionalize conversational devices and mannerisms (e.g., "you know"), (3) they may convey uncertainty, and (4) they can be used as "intentional devices" (e.g., "Look what I did!"). Furthermore, six levels of thinking may be represented by the terms in the aforementioned categories: perception, recognition, recall, understanding, metacognition, and evaluation.

<sup>20</sup>Tishman and Perkins, "The Language of Thinking"; Ellin K. Scholnick and William S. Hall, "The Language of Thinking: Metacognitive and Conditional Words," in *Perspectives on Language and Thought: Interrelations in Development*, ed. S.A. Gelman and J.P. Byrnes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 397–439.

<sup>21</sup>Israel Scheffler, "In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions," *Teachers College Records* 79 (1977): 171–86.

<sup>22</sup>William S. Hall and William E. Nagy, "The Semantic-Pragmatic Distinction in Internal State Words: The Role of the Situation," *Discourse Processes* 19, no. 2 (1987): 169–80.

These classifications served as a departing point in developing an analytical instrument for the study. However, the categories used here emerged as a by-product of the interactive, recursive process of going back and forth between text readings, preliminary observations, and the refinement of potential linguistic patterns. Such patterns resulted from the quantitative and qualitative assessment of the data as they were coded, classified, tallied up, organized, and finally, interpreted.

In addition to analyzing the metacognitive verbal expressions found in the *Respuesta*, I decided to examine the co-occurrence of these verbs with first-person reference. According to Olson, subjectivity, in its reflexive state, refers to the “recognition of one’s own and other’s mental states as mental states.”<sup>23</sup> It involves the construction of a first-person perspective in relation to those mental states. Thus, Olson argues, subjectivity “opens the door to introspection” and is tied to consciousness of mind.<sup>24</sup> Given the fact that the notion of subjectivity is closely related to the concept of consciousness, it is thus expected that key linguistic elements related to a subjective stance include first-person markers. The writer’s language—in this case Sor Juana’s language—used to describe or “talk about” her thinking is assumed to be a reflection not only of her reasoning process and mental acts and products but also of her distance from, involvement in, or attitudes towards those processes, acts, and products. Therefore, the “I” subject and the “I” self (explicit or implied) and the mental states being described are inextricably linked. For this reason, first-person reference, particularly the explicit use of *yo*, the first-person singular subject pronoun in Spanish, is included as a relevant variable in the analysis of mental verbs.

As can be seen in Table 1, the metacognitive verbs used by Sor Juana in the *Respuesta* were classified into the following categories: intellectual processes, cognitive states, speech acts, epistemic attitudes, cognitive emotions, planning, and literacy activities. The use of the first-person singular subject pronoun *yo* was assessed in terms of its explicit presence or its absence according to traditional rules of use of this pronoun. In Spanish, adding an explicit *yo* to a statement only occurs in restricted situations: to disambiguate verbal forms employed with more than one pronoun (although this is often worked out through context), to give emphasis to a statement, to contrast the self with other persons, and, more impor-

<sup>23</sup>Olson, *The World on Paper*, 234.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. It is important to remember, Olson explains, that while the ability to think of the mental states of others appears to be innate and universal, the conceptualization of the interplay of action, intention, belief, and desire seem to be culturally dependent, linked in particular to literacy practices. The notion of understanding, for instance, is related to the development of the notions of subjectivity and consciousness as well as the ways of referring to knowledge, speech, and feelings. The development of writing made it possible to transform aspects of language into objects of consciousness and, by extension, the ideas that words represent also became similar objects.

tantly, to affirm the personality of the speaker.<sup>25</sup> The first-person pronoun is also analyzed in terms of its co-occurrence with the metacognitive verbs just mentioned. I hypothesize that the co-occurrence of these two elements is a way to enhance linguistically the subjective stance of the text writer, since the unmarked case of a proposition in Spanish does not contain an explicit *yo*.

<i>Types of Verbal Expression</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Intellectual-Process Verbs	Distinct “ways” of thinking or reasoning, acquisition of knowledge, development of understanding, etc.	<i>Contemplar</i> (contemplate) <i>Descubrir</i> (discover) <i>Darse cuenta</i> (realize)
Cognitive-State Verbs	Verbs describing static state of knowledge (or lack of it), i.e., what one knows at a given moment	<i>Saber</i> (know) <i>Conocer</i> (know) <i>Entender</i> (understand)
Speech-Act Verbs	Verbs that describe modes of direct and indirect speech or language production in general	<i>Decir</i> (say) <i>Afirmar</i> (assert) <i>Proponer</i> (propose)
Epistemic-Attitude Verbs	Verbs by which the speaker/writer expresses attitudes towards what is said/written	<i>Creer</i> (believe) <i>Dudar</i> (doubt) <i>Estar seguro</i> (be certain)
Cognitive-Emotion Verbs	Verbs that expres both mental processing and emotional involvement	<i>Admirar</i> (admire) <i>Atreverse</i> (dare) <i>Ceder</i> (give in)
Planning Verbs	Verbs that describe intention and determination, as well as desire, wish, and choice	<i>Intentar</i> (try) <i>Decidir</i> (decide) <i>Esperar</i> (hope)
Literacy Verbs	Verbs that describe literacy activities in general	<i>Excribir</i> (write) <i>Leer</i> (read)

Table 1. Categories of Metacognitive Verbal Expression

#### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Before presenting the quantitative and qualitative analyses and the results obtained in the study, it is important to review briefly some of the more general textual characteristics of the Respuesta, since the interpretation of the data should be considered in light of the discourse context in which

<sup>25</sup>According to Manuel Seco, *Diccionario de Dudas y Dificultades de la Lengua* (Española. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1986), the use of an overt/explicit pronoun versus null/no pronoun is typically explained in terms of emphasis and avoidance of ambiguity. However, Robert Bayley and Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, “Null Pronoun Variation in Mexican-Descent Children’s Narrative Discourse,” *Language Variation and Change* 9 (1997): 349–71, explain that, in recent years, sociolinguistic studies of modern Spanish and Portuguese have shown that this variation is “conditioned by multiple linguistic, social, and stylistic factors, among them co-reference with the subject of the preceding verb, surface ambiguity of the verb form, education, age, and speech style” as well as degree of “discourse connectedness.” Given that this study deals with seventeenth-century Spanish, I decided to take into account only the traditional rules as defined by Seco.

they occur. As previously mentioned, this text belongs to what is known as the religious epistolary genre and includes many of the features typical of this genre within the Baroque literary style: multiple voices and meanings, ambiguity, complexity, and so forth. Sor Juana also uses rhetorical conventions and patterns typical of other genres, such as Renaissance legal discourse, exegetical discussions and sermons, traditional autobiographical narratives composed by nuns (*Vidas* or Lives), and Greek and Roman classical rhetorical models. In the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana defends herself, her work, her right to be a scholar and to use profane themes in her poems. She also advocates the right of women to be educated and to participate in critical discussions of religious themes. In addition, she contends that a rationalistic, logical approach to acquiring knowledge is valid, and even necessary, for a proper understanding of philosophical and religious matters. In composing the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana makes use of many of the rhetorical conventions expected of nuns, such as self-deprecatory remarks and personal anecdotes, as well as reference to biblical figures and concepts. However, unlike typical female, religious writing, she also includes citations from a wide range of scholars (often in Latin), exegetical analysis, legal argumentation, and rationalistic discussions. These characteristics led Arenal and Powell to consider the *Respuesta* as an example of humanist moralism, within the Mexican theological literary space, which “anticipates a later genre, the polemical essay.”<sup>26</sup>

Now, how does Sor Juana construct her text in relation to her metacognitive, subjective “Self”? What are the verbal expressions used to describe her mental acts and products, and how do these relate to her textual presence as expressed through the use of an explicit *yo*?

In Table 2, a quantitative description of the metacognitive verbal expressions found in the *Respuesta* is provided. In order to assess the range and variety of verbs used within each category, the number of verb types as opposed to verb tokens were tallied up. Verb types refer to semantic categories, for example, the verb *descubrir* (to discover), whereas verb tokens refer to the various forms that a verb type could take, such as *descubro*, *descubrí*, *he descubierto* (I discover, I discovered, I have discovered).

As shown in Table 2, Sor Juana uses a higher number of verb tokens in the categories of “Speech-Act” verbs (26% of total) and “Intellectual-process” verbs (21%). “Speech-Act” verbs are those that describe the production of language as well as specific modes in which statements might be expressed. “Intellectual-Process” verbs, on the other hand, refer to distinct ways of thinking or reasoning, and they also denote the active acquisition of knowledge, the development of understanding, and the production of new and innovative ideas (see Table 1). Thus, the first find-

<sup>26</sup>Arenal and Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta*, 22.

ing shows that a substantial proportion (47% of the total) of Sor Juana's verbs of thinking in the *Respuesta* is comprised by verbal expressions in these two categories.

	<i>I-P Verbs</i>		<i>C-S Verbs</i>		<i>S-A Verbs</i>		<i>E-A Verbs</i>		<i>C-E Verbs</i>		<i>Planning Verbs</i>		<i>Literacy Verbs</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	tkn	typ	tkn	typ	tkn	typ	tkn	typ	tkn	typ	tkn	typ	tkn	typ	tkn	typ
Counts	47	25	29	6	58	12	27	8	14	12	24	13	25	3	224	75
Ratio	1:1.9		1:4.8		1:4.8		1:3.4		1:1.2		1:1.8		1:8.3		1:2.3	
Most frequent verbs	<i>ver</i> - 16 <i>acordarse</i> - 4 <i>considerar</i> - 3		<i>saber</i> - 17 <i>conocer</i> - 6 <i>entender</i> - 2 <i>tener</i> <i>caudal</i> - 2		<i>decir</i> - 27 <i>confesar</i> - 7 <i>hablar</i> - 6		<i>creer</i> - 11 <i>parecer</i> - 8 <i>juzgar</i> - 2 <i>tener por</i> - 2		<i>atreverse</i> - 3 all others - 1		<i>querer</i> - 6 <i>proponerse</i> - 3 <i>desear</i> - 2 <i>elegir</i> - 2 <i>intentar</i> - 2		<i>escribir</i> - 14 <i>estudiar</i> - 9 <i>leer</i> - 2		156 (69.6%)	

Frequency Counts of Metacognitive Expressions

The category that yielded the fewest verb tokens was “Cognitive-Emotion” verbs (6% of the total number of occurrences). The remaining verbal categories yielded the following percentages: “Cognitive-State” verbs, 13%; “Epistemic-Attitude” verbs, 12%; “Planning” verbs, 11%; and “Literacy” Verbs, 11%. In comparing verb types with verb tokens, it was noted that, even though speech-act verbs are more numerous than “Intellectual-Process” verbs, there are relatively few verb types accounting for those speech-act verbs: Sor Juana uses only 12 different verbs in producing 58 tokens, yielding a ratio close to 1:5. There is, therefore, little variety in the types of verbs used by her in the “Speech-Act” category. In contrast, in the category of “Intellectual-Process” verbs, she used more verb types, with a ratio of almost 1:2. It can be said, on the basis of this finding, that Sor Juana either chose a fewer number of “Speech-Act” verb types to express a mental activity, or found that this category didn't offer her a wide variety of linguistic options to express her intended meaning. In other words, using speech-act verbal expressions to refer to her own thinking and reasoning was a productive strategy in Sor Juana's prose, given the number of occurrences. However, the verbal expressions (verb types) available for such a purpose do not seem to have been as extensive. This is not the case in relation to Sor Juana's use of “Intellectual-Process” verbal expressions, a similarly favored strategy, but one where Sor Juana seems to have found more linguistic resources, given the number of verb types used. The category with the greatest verb type-token ratio is that of “Literacy” verbs, where only 3 verb types account for 25 tokens, with a ratio close to 1:8.

The more frequent verb types in all categories found in the *Respuesta*, as well as corresponding verb tokens, are also listed in Table 2. The most common speech-act verbs are: *decir* (say), *confesar* (confess), and *hablar* (speak, talk). In the intellectual-process category, they are: *ver* (see), *acor-*

*darse* (remember, recall), and *considerar* (consider). It is worth noting that these frequently used verbs account for almost 70% of the total number of occurrences across categories (156 out of 224). It can be said, then, that these constitute—in essence—the core lexical system of Sor Juana’s metacognitive expressions regarding verbal predicates, as used in the *Respuesta*. It was also noticed that almost all of the frequent metacognitive verbs in the *Respuesta* are verbs of common use in contemporary Spanish, with the exception of the verbal expressions *tener caudal* and *tener por*.<sup>27</sup>

In general terms, a pragmatic analysis refers to an examination of the relationships between discourse (e.g., text organization, linguistic choices), context (e.g., time, place, cultural conventions), and interlocutors (e.g., purpose of communication, power relationships) that are encoded into the structure of the language. In this study, the focus is restricted to what is known as linguistic pragmatics, which adopts the general principles of pragmatics in systematically accounting for acts involving linguistic expressions.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the interpretation of the data focuses on the linguistic choices made by Sor Juana in conveying meaning so that the reader/interpreter of her text can re-assess his/her model of how things are...including a model of the speaker’s or writer’s beliefs, attitudes, and intentions.<sup>29</sup> The qualitative analysis that follows examines the relationship between linguistic choice and intended meaning.

Among the frequent verb types used by Sor Juana, the most frequent is the verb *decir* (to say, in modern Spanish), which appears 27 times in the *Respuesta*. Sor Juana repeatedly uses this verb to introduce her own ideas and arguments, as in excerpt 1:

Y volviendo a nuestro Arce, *digo* que trae en confirmación de su sentir aquellas palabras de mi Padre San Jerónimo (ad Laetam, de institutione filiae), donde dice: Adhuc tenera lingua...<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup>In Maria Moliner, *Diccionario de Uso del Español* (Madrid: Gredos, 1986), the term *caudal* refers, in the sixth entry, to a “treasure” or the “richness” that comes from the possession of something (e.g., *Tiene un caudal con esos ojos*). In the seventh entry, *caudal* refers to the abundance of something (e.g., *Tiene un caudal de simpatía*). However, these expressions seem somewhat awkward to contemporary speakers of Mexican Spanish. In the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana uses this expression twice: “...que no tengo caudal para ello [para enseñar],” which conforms to the former meaning; and “que tenga el caudal de letras e ingenio,” which conforms to the latter. As for the expression *tener por*, Moliner explains that this form occurs very often in the imperative mode, meaning “to consider.” It is added that the expression “tener por cierta [una cosa]” means “to be sure [of something].” Sor Juana also uses this expression twice: “porque yo tengo por muy necio al que...,” and “y tengo por mayor el riesgo de los aplausos...,” which express the meaning of “to consider,” although there is also an element of certainty involved.

<sup>28</sup>Georgia M. Green, *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996).

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Arenal and Powell, *The Answer/La Respuesta*, 82, line 884. All line numbers are from this edition.

(And returning to our own Arce, *I observe* that in support of his views he presents these words of my father St. Jerome (in the letter to Leta, on the education of her daughter), where he says: “Her childish tongue....”<sup>31</sup>

It is interesting to note that, in Arenal and Powell’s translation of this excerpt, the verb “observe” (a verb of perception) is used to convey the functional meaning of *digo* (I say). In fact, Sor Juana’s use of the verb *decir* seems to be an indication of the predominant function of this verb to express a mental act or product, in addition to its function as a descriptor of the act of speaking. In other words, in using *decir* to refer to a mental act, with a meaning close to “I believe” or “I think,” Sor Juana expresses her cognitive subjectivity. She is obviously not uttering words, nor is she actually perceiving something (in the strict sense of the term); rather, the functional meaning of this verb—a typical speech-act verb—is appropriated to convey an extended meaning: to notice, believe, or think.

The verb “confess,” also relatively frequent among “Speech-Act” verbs in the *Respuesta*, is somewhat expected, given the religious condition of Sor Juana. However, a separate analysis of the single other letter by Sor Juana that has been recovered, known as “The Letter of Monterrey” (a letter of a more private nature), revealed that such a verb type was not used at all in this other document.<sup>32</sup> This might be an indication that the *Respuesta* represents, indeed, a different genre from that of the private letter, and is thus more closely related to the evolution of the Hispanic essay, as suggested by Concejo.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the verb “confess” might be related more to formal texts of a public nature than to private letters.

The high frequency of the verb *ver* (to see) also proved to be quite revealing. Sor Juana uses this verb in its present-day function of describing the subjective act of understanding or realizing something in excerpt 2:

<sup>31</sup>Arenal and Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta*, 83, line 968. All translations are from this edition.

<sup>32</sup>This document was discovered in 1980 by Aureliano Tapia Mendez at the Monterrey Archdiocesan Seminary in Northern Mexico. It appears in his publication entitled *Carta de Sor Juana de la Cruz a su confesor: Autodefensa Espiritual* (Monterrey: Impresora, 1986). A third “letter,” known as the *Carta de Serafina de Cristo*, is also attributed to Sor Juana: Elías Trábulse ed., *La Carta de Serafina de Cristo* (Toluca: Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura, 1996); cited in Poot Herrera, “Las Cartas de Sor Juana.” The latter document is dated 1 February 1691, that is, one month previous to the date in the *Respuesta*, dated 1 March of the same year. If Sor Juana is indeed *Serafina*, it is she who now uses a pseudonym. However, this letter is not in prose; rather it is composed as a “poetic labyrinth.” Emil Volek, “La Señora y la Ilustre Fregona: Las Trampas de la Comunicación, Teología y Poder entre Sor Filotea y Sor Juana” in *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y sus Contemporáneos*, ed. M. Glantz (Cd. de México: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1998), 333–57.

<sup>33</sup>Pilar Consejo, “El Origen del Ensayo Hispánico y el Género Epistolar,” *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 373 (1981): 158–62.

he buscado muy de propósito cuál sea el daño que puedan tener [mis versos], y no le he hallado; antes sí los *veo* aplaudidos en las bocas de las Sibilas; santificados en la plumas de.... (line 1089)

(I have sought quite deliberately to discover what harm there might be in them [my verses], and I cannot. Rather, *I see* them praised in the mouths of the Sybils and sanctified by the pens of.... [line 1191])

However, Sor Juana uses this verb more frequently in a different way, that is, conveying a different functional meaning and one no longer common in contemporary standard Spanish as demonstrated in excerpt 3:

*veo* que también dice San Gregorio: Victoria non minor est.... (line 1178)

(*I see* too that Saint Gregory says: Victoria non minor est.... [line 1289])

and excerpt 4:

Y para no buscar ejemplos fuera de casa, *veo* una santísima madre mía, Paula, docta en las lenguas hebrea, griega y latina y aptísima para interpretar las Escrituras. (line 789)

(And seeking no more examples far from home, *I see* my own most holy mother Paula, learned in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongues and most expert in the interpretation of the Scriptures. [line 862])

In excerpt 3, Sor Juana uses the verb *veo* in order to include, as part of her argument, a citation in Latin by Saint Gregory. The function of “see” is thus to introduce new information from a reputable source as evidence and support for her argument. In this way, the verb indicates, rather, an equivalent to “I cite / quote.” In other words, to the usual meanings of “seeing” (as a physical act and as a mental act), a third meaning is added: a discursive function to introduce evidential information (e.g., extra-textual information), almost in the form of “I present evidence” (as in excerpt 4). The verb *veo* means, therefore, both “I understand” and “I cite / quote” or “the evidence is.” This is even more evident in excerpt 5, which comes from a section in which Sor Juana presents a list of famous learned women found in literature, theology, and history to similarly support her thesis:

*Veo* una Pola Argentaria, que ayudó a Lucano, su marido, a escribir la gran Batalla Farsálica. *Veo* a la hija del divino Tiresias, más docta que su padre. *Veo* a una Cenobia, reina de los Palmirenos,

tan sabia como valerosa. A una Arete, hija de Aristipo, doctísima.  
(line 772)

(*I see* one Polla Argentaria, who helped Lucan, her husband, to write the Battle of Pharsalia. *I see* the daughter of the divine Tiresias, more learned still than her father. *I see*, too, such a woman as Zenobia, queen of the Palmyrians, as wise as she is courageous. Again, *I see* an Arete, daughter of Aristippus, most learned. [line 844])

Therefore, the function of the verb “see” is not only to convey an act of understanding and to cite relevant sources, but it also serves to introduce new information or concepts into the text, thereby making it an organizational / rhetorical device.

In relation to the verb type *acordarse* (to remember, recall), it is important to note that this form, used four times by Sor Juana in the *Respuesta*, occurs more frequently in modern Spanish in speech or informal texts, as opposed to the form *recordar*, which has the same meaning but is of slightly higher (more formal) register.<sup>34</sup> This potential diachronic variation might also be related to the connection between the epistolary genre and the essay and, in this case, the use of *acordarse* could be a feature that reflects more the epistolary style of the *Respuesta* rather than its essay-like features. Another possibility is that the two variants evolved differentially in their use (register variation) across time.

In terms of the relationship between metacognitive verbs and first-person reference markers, this connection proved to be strong at both the qualitative and quantitative levels. Out of a total of 75 instances of explicit *yo* found in the *Respuesta*, 44 (58%) co-occur with a metacognitive verb. In other words, in more than half of the cases in which an explicit *yo* was used by Sor Juana, it was accompanied by a verb related to the language of thinking. As a result, these mental activities are emphasized, personalized, or increased in their subjective expressiveness. This finding suggests that the locutionary subjectivity in the *Respuesta* is grammaticalized, in one way, through the relatively frequent collocation of those two elements (i.e., *yo* + metacognitive verb).

A further relevant feature related to the use of explicit first-person singular pronouns was the relatively frequent inversion of subject pronoun and metacognitive verb, as exemplified in excerpt 6:

Esto *me proponía yo* de mí misma y me parecía razón ; si no es que era (y eso es lo más cierto) lisonjear y aplaudir a mi propia inclinación.... (line 273)

<sup>34</sup>R. E. Batchelor, *Using Spanish Synonyms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

(*I argued* in this way *to myself*, and I thought my own argument quite reasonable. However, the fact may have been (and this seems most likely) that I was merely flattering and encouraging my own inclination... [line 298])

and excerpt 7:

reprendédme, que eso *apreciaré yo* más que todo cuanto vano aplauso me pueden otros dar.... (line 880)

(chastise me, for *I shall value* that more than all the vain applause others could give me.... [line 964])

This type of inversion marks even more the explicit presence of the self in a statement, in contrast to the unmarked subject-verb sequence. In the *Respuesta*, there are 13 instances of such an inversion out of 44 (29.5%) “*yo* + metacognitive verb” constructions. Similarly, in the “Letter of Monterrey,” this strategy accounts for 36% of the cases (5 of 14). Furthermore, in this latter document, subject-verb inversions represent almost half of all instances (46.8%, 15 of 32) of subject-verb (any verb) constructions. In the *Respuesta*, overt subject + verb inversions (any verb) account for 33% of the cases (25 of 75). So, this seems to be a strategy favored by Sor Juana in constructing a subjective, cognitive “Self” in her reflective prose. In addition, in excerpt 6, it can be noticed that Sor Juana not only uses an explicit *yo* and inverts it with the verb, but also over-emphasizes her message by using the indirect object form *de mí* plus the reflexive marker *misma* (myself), which seems superfluous and non-standard to a contemporary reader. Similarly, she also emphasizes her “inclination” to learn by using the qualifier *mi propia* (my own). An even more striking example of the redundancy of first-person marking in some of Sor Juana’s statements is illustrated in excerpt 8:

Pensé *yo* que huía *de mi misma*, pero !miserable *de mí!* Trájemé a *mí conmigo* y traje *mi* mayor enemigo en esta inclinación, que *no se* determinar si por prenda o castigo *me* dio el Cielo.... (line 251)

(*I thought I* was fleeing *myself*, but—woe *of me!*— *I* brought *myself with me*, and brought *my* greatest enemy in this inclination to study, which *I know not* whether to take as a Heaven-sent favor or as a punishment.... [line 274])

In this excerpt, Sor Juana’s use of first-person markers is highly redundant: an explicit *yo*, subject + verb inversion, the object pronouns *mí* and *me*, the possessive pronoun *mi*, and the reflexive marker *mi misma*, in addition to verb endings already marking first-person reference. All of these elements contribute to highlight the locutionary subjectivity of Sor Juana’s prose as reflected in the *Respuesta*.

Finally, excerpt 8 also serves to exemplify another important feature of Sor Juana's subjectivity: her divided "Self." As has been pointed out by Martínez-San Miguel, in the writings of Sor Juana, a divided subject emerges representing two facets that function in a complementary manner: an obedient "Self" and a dominated "Self," one "menacing" and "disturbing" the other.<sup>35</sup> Martínez-San Miguel states that, in the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana represents herself as a divided "Self" whose intellectual inclination is the "agent," and whose condition as woman and nun embodies the "passive" subject dominated by such an inclination (excerpt 9).

!Rara especie de martirio dondo *yo* era el mártir y *me* era el verdugo!

(A strange type of martyrdom, where I was the martyr and "me" was the executioner! )<sup>36</sup>

This last excerpt also reveals Sor Juana's innovative use of the linguistic resources at her hand. She conveys here, in a precise, efficient, and rather elegant manner, her divided "Self" by using, in the last clause, the object pronoun *me* in the position of the subject pronoun, while keeping the subject pronoun *yo* in the preceding clause. This is an ungrammatical usage, yet a highly accurate way to convey intended meaning through linguistic markers.

#### CONCLUSION

The present analysis reveals that the locutionary metacognitive subjectivity expressed by Sor Juana in the *Respuesta* is constructed, in part, by means of a relatively frequent use of intellectual-process verbs and speech-act verbs. The quantitative analysis conducted for this study showed that speech-act verbs are more frequent in terms of verb tokens, but intellectual-process verbs, although less frequent, are represented by a larger number of verb types. However, the single most frequent intellectual-process verb used by Sor Juana was *ver*, which was often used in ways that are not standard in modern Spanish. Based on these findings, it is possible to speculate that, in seventeenth-century Spanish in the New Spain, intellectual-process terms were limited in terms of the variants available in the language, although they were quite necessary to convey the relationship

<sup>35</sup>Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, "Engendrando el Sujeto Femenino del Saber o las Estrategias para la Construcción de una Conciencia Epistemológica Colonial en Sor Juana," *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 40 (1994): 259–80.

<sup>36</sup>I modified slightly the translation offered by Arenal and Powell, *The Answer / La Respuesta*, 63, line 513, in order to highlight the use of the object pronoun "me," given that its usage is key to the discussion about this excerpt.

between a writer and her text, and between subjective “Self” and intended meaning. A hypothesis can then be formulated that, in Sor Juana’s time, intellectual-process terms might not yet have evolved into the wide number of variants available to the modern writer. This is certainly an area that deserves further research and one which can be expanded to investigations regarding the diachronic relationship between intellectual and speech-act verbs in Spanish and, for that matter, in other languages.

The results also suggest that the effect of conjoining mental activity with utterance production (use of the verb *decir*, for instance), as well as with perceptual knowledge (as with the functional use of the verb *ver*) may have been a strategy to increase the writer’s subjective stance and involvement in relation to the content of the text and its message. The metacognitive verbal expressions used by Sor Juana provide us, therefore, with valuable indicators of how the language of thinking was constructed in the seventeenth century epistolary, essay-like genre.

In addition, the study showed that, in Sor Juana’s *Respuesta*, metacognitive verbal predicates interact markedly with first-person reference markers. The two elements collocate to a great extent given the fact that, in 58% of the cases in which an explicit *yo* is used, the first-person pronoun is accompanied by a metacognitive verb. Moreover, it seems that Sor Juana purposely emphasizes this co-occurrence by including other first-person markers in her prose, to the point that the presence of the writer becomes highly redundant. Investigations on factors affecting overt/null pronoun variation in Spanish are, for the most part, focused on dialectal variation and are commonly synchronic in scope. More research is necessary to investigate the evolution of this linguistic feature in the Spanish language across genres and from a diachronic perspective.

To conclude, much remains to be done regarding the language of thinking in relation to the subjective “Self,” an endeavor particularly challenging when one focuses on non-contemporary texts. All I can say is that I “see” Sor Juana when she quotes an unnamed poet: “Even when strength is lacking, still the intention must be praised. I surmised the gods would be content with that.”