

Le pronom *you* dans les insultes directes en anglais : une usurpation d'identité

Identity theft: the pronoun *you* in direct insults in English

Stéphanie Béliçon

Abstract: In English it is possible to resort to the pronoun *you* in « insulting utterances » such as *You idiot!*, *You bastard!*, etc. The pronoun does not seem necessary in those utterances in the sense that it does not give any information about the addressee, who can generally be identified. Those constructions compete with the use of an insulting term on its own (e.g. *Idiot!*, *Bastard*, etc.). This paper aims to determine the role of the pronoun and to analyse to what extent the structures with and without *you* differ. The hypothesis put forward here is that *you* is evidence that the speaker does not address his/her co-speaker; on the contrary s/he endeavours to deprive his/her addressee of his/her identity and reduces this identity to an insulting lexeme. Paradoxically, the use of *you* turns the person insulted into a “non-person” (cf. Benveniste 1966: 228) appropriated by the speaker.

Key words: pronouns, *you*, insults, imperatives, apostrophe.