LATIN@S OR LATINXS? INNOVATION IN SPANISH GENDER INCLUSIVE ORAL EXPRESSION[*]

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1.   Introduction

Gender inclusive language is defined as a way of speaking that does not perpetuate gender-based stereotypes, and includes all gender identities (Sczesny et al. 2016, Nissen 2013). Gender inclusive language has different goals, but the main goal is to rid language of gender and linguistic asymmetries. One goal is to increase visibility of women, by always providing the feminine form along with the masculine, for example. The other goal is to enable people who do not identify as a man or a woman have the ability to speak about themselves in a language where grammatical gender is required. A problem arises on how best to indicate gender neutrality in a language that is explicitly binarily gendered, such as Spanish. Currently, one is required to pick either masculine or feminine gender, denoting either man or woman gender identity. As part of the established grammar, there is no way to talk about or refer to a person that does not identify as a man or woman. Gender inclusivity is a topic that is extremely relevant in current times as we begin to question the traditional binary gender system in light of changing gender roles and identities in current times. We see words like *latinx* and 'they' being added to the English dictionary as a way to refer to all people with Latin American heritage (Guidotti-Hernandez 2017, Locker 2019).

Spanish is traditionally viewed as a grammatically binary gender-based Romance language (Loporcaro 2018). This means that all nouns, whether animate or not, are either masculine or feminine, as are elements that agree with nouns (determiners, adjectives, third-person pronouns). In the case of inanimate subjects, the allocation of gender is arbitrary. Inanimate nouns like 'floor' and 'table' (*el piso* M.S. and *la mesa* F.S., respectively) are examples of the binary gender system in Spanish. Gender inclusive language provides an option, or options, beyond the traditional masculine-feminine binary currently available in Spanish. Inclusive language markers tackle semantic gender, for (primarily human) animate referents. Semantic gender is motivated by social gender roles. The binary system established for grammatical gender will persist in languages with grammatical gender, like Spanish. Thus, 'floor' and 'table' will continue to be masculine and feminine, respectively, in Spanish. But nouns and adjectives with human referents are affected by gender inclusive language because they correspond to social gender roles. Thus, the grammatical gender system that is an essential component of Romance languages would not be completely removed, but rather expanded to account for expanding social roles. On the other hand, the gender of most animate subjects corresponds to the apparent

biological sex of the referent, particularly when denoting humans, but also for familiar animals (i.e. pets). Nouns that refer to humans, like 'student', generally have two alternate forms, male and female (e.g. *el alumno* M.S. and *la alumna* F.S.). In most nouns with human referents, the male ends in *-o* and the female in *-a*, although there are other nouns that have different endings, such as other vowels (rarely) or a select few consonants. With these other suffixes, there is not always a difference between the masculine and feminine forms of the noun, with gender being marked by determiners or other agreeing elements (e.g. *el/la artista* 'the: M.S./F.S. artist'). Due to the male-dominated nature of Spanish, some researchers have conducted research to discover how to make Spanish more gender inclusive (e.g. Vidal-Ortíz and Martínez 2018, Prewitt-Freilino et al. 2011).

Since the 1980s, there have been five different ways to represent gender inclusive language that have appeared in Spanish. Doublets were the first way that inclusive language was introduced in Spanish, along with the innovative markers *-o/a*, *-a(o)*, and *-@*. This was the standard way that inclusive language was represented till the early 2000s, and these options were thought to be inclusive until recently (Milian 2017). The adoption of the suffix *-x* into Spanish to replace gendered endings (*-a* and *-o*) has recently been researched (e.g. Guidotti-Hernández 2017, Milian 2017, Higa and Dunham 2019). The *-x* developed in the United States in the early 2000s and was introduced by heritage speakers and Latin American immigrants (Morales 2018). Starting in the mid-2010s, a new inclusive option appeared online that mimicked the existing morphophonology of Spanish : *-e* (Slemp et al. 2019). There has not been significant linguistic research into the more recent inclusive attempts like the *-x* and the *-e* in Spanish that examines the situation of inclusive language, the motivation, and the rationale for favoring one inclusive form over another.

The project examines if one of the inclusive options is more prominent than the others, and the motivations for using one form over the other. It is also a sociolinguistic examination, determining if there are any demographic variables that have a significant correlation with gender inclusive language, since the previous literature indicates that age and gender have an effect on language change and variation (Kirkham and Moore 2013, Queen 2013). This research accomplishes the goal of seeing what innovations speakers are developing and using in order to get outside of the binary options.

The research question discussed in this paper is: *How and to what extent do Spanish speakers express gender inclusivity orally and in writing?*

2. Literature review

Spanish-speaking children acquire or recognize the gender of animate and inanimate nouns alike at a young age, normally as young as 34 months old (e.g. Pérez-Pereira 1991, Lew-Williams and Fernald 2007, Foote 2014).This binary grammatical gender system is acquired early and easily in speakers from a young age and is pervasive in the entirety of the Spanish language. Gender agreement within phrases is marked phonologically and morphosyntactically, and it is suggested that these markings help listeners follow different referents in speech (Lew-Williams and Fernald 2007).

According to Guillelmon and Grosjean (2001), when they investigated the nature of gender processing during spoken word recognition in bilinguals,they concluded that

early acquisition is vital for nativelike processing of gender. According to Carroll (1989), children acquiring a gender-marking language from birth initially analyze determiners as part of the noun and only later reanalyze them as separate words. Late learners do not go through these stages of analysis and reanalysis and thus do not develop gender representations in the same way as native speakers.

All major modern Romance languages, apart from Romanian, are known to contain a binary grammatical gender system (Loporcaro 2018). The masculine form in Romance is the syntactically unmarked form (in the case of Spanish, nouns and their agreements generally ending in -*o*) and systematically occurs on agreement targets in default contexts. Generally, the masculine singular form of adjectives is utilized with non-canonical controllers, as well as for cases where the clitic resumes a nominal or adjectival predicate rather than an argument. Masculine agreement is also the default option in gender resolution contexts (Loporcaro 2018).

Noun morphology aids in gender agreement, and is a reliable cue for establishing correct agreements in the phrase and sentence as a whole (Alarcón 2011). Native Spanish speakers use overt morphology as a strong linguistic cue for gender agreement in both comprehension and production (Alarcón 2011). Spanish has reliable phonological cues for gender, given that the majority of the nouns that end in -*a* are feminine, and those that end in -*o* are masculine (Loporcaro 2018; Clegg 2010). Nouns that end in a consonant or -*e*, and (the very few) nouns that end in other vowels are categorized as opaque with respect to gender, despite some predictable patterns. There are also nouns that end in -*a* or -*o* that have the opposite gender of what is expected (e.g. *el mapa* 'the map', *la mano* 'the hand'). There are approximately twice as many transparently marked nouns in Spanish as there are opaque (Harris 1991). The gender of a noun has consequences for other elements in the noun phrase and beyond, namely agreement with determiners and adjectives. There are many adjectives that do not vary in form depending on the gender of the noun that they agree with, but may end in -*e*, or a consonant (or rarely, another vowel).

In Spanish, [ks], [gz], [s], or variations of [x], the possible phonetic representations of orthographic <x>, are not permissible as syllable nuclei. A common inclusive word that contains the -*x* marker in Spanish is *todxs* ('everyone' N.P., in comparison to *todos*, M.P.). This word is an innovation introduced by speakers. Phonetically, this would likely be transcribed as *[to.ðk.ses] where the underlined consonant cluster is not allowed as a syllable in Spanish. There must be a vowel present to form the second syllable. Therefore, the question is raised as to how -*x* is pronounceable, and to the overall viability of this inclusive marker. Growing in popularity more rapidly than the -*x*, is the morpheme -*e* (Slemp et al. 2019). Contrarily to the -*x*, there is no question how -*e* would be pronounced because the epicene -*e* exists in Spanish already, in words like *estudiante* ('student' [es.tu.ðjan.te] MF.S.) and *verde* ('green' [beɾ.ðe] MF.S.) which do not overtly mark for gender. To take the earlier example, *todes* ('everyone' [to.ðes] N.P.) is easily pronounceable according to Spanish phonological patterns.

Accurately representing the gender of an animate referent has perceptual implications, as shown by the studies conducted by Flaherty (2001) and Nissen (2013). In Flaherty's (2001) experiment, it can be seen that the association between gender assignment and grammatical gender increases with age when assigning gender to a cartoon

drawing of an object. A child begins to use a grammatical gender system as a classifier somewhere between 6 and 9 years of age. Similarly, in the study by Clarke et al. (1981), comparison of the responses of Arabic and English speakers suggests that the gender of the nouns in Arabic affected the response of the Arabic speakers. Nouns like 'necklace' and 'perfume', whose equivalents are masculine in Arabic, received a higher masculine rating than from English speakers, where these objects are traditionally associated with women.

Research has linked gender-exclusive language with sexist beliefs and attitudes (Swim et al. 2004, Sczesny et al. 2015). This can go as far as those with sexist beliefs making deliberate decisions to use language that perpetuates gender stereotyping and supports patriarchy, as seen in Sczesny et al. (2015) where participants deliberately avoided using gender-inclusive language because they viewed it as oppressive political correctness or that it was unnecessary due to the (false) masculine generic (2015: 952). Thus, such language use appeared to require explicit, intentional decision making. Studies are being done on why speakers choose to incorporate gender inclusivity into their speech, but not extensively in Spanish (e.g. Sczesny et al. 2015, Patterson 2017).

Normally changes in the written structure of a language follow changes in spoken language (Fought 2013); gender inclusive innovations in this case are the opposite, where the -@ and -x markers have been introduced into written language without regard for a uniform pronunciation, and without even considering whether it will be possible to pronounce at all. Adolescents are frequently the sector of speakers that drive language variation and change (Kirkham and Moore 2013). They are between adulthood and childhood, which creates the perfect environment to "adapt, resignify and reconstrue language variation" (Kirkham and Moore 2013: 399) so it is not surprising that the generation participating largely in the *latinx* movement is the adolescent group and younger adults (e.g. Guidotti-Hernandez 2017, Slemp et al. 2019). Additionally, women are more likely to use innovative forms in language when prestige is not a consideration (Queen 2013). Ethnicity may also contribute to the pronunciation of gender inclusive language (Fought 2013), though it is not the focus of this project, one cannot ignore the intersectional relationship that exists between gender and ethnicity (Eckert and McConnell- Ginet 2003).

Inclusive language generally only aims to affect animate nouns with human referents, or rather affect semantic gender rather than grammatical gender. Semantic gender is determined by the apparent biological sex of the referent and social gender roles. In Spanish, both grammatical and semantic gender are generally denoted by either an -*o* or an -*a*. Spanish nouns with grammatical gender like floor (*el piso*) and table (*la mesa*) would not be altered by inclusive language, but nouns with semantic gender (e.g. *chico* 'boy' and *chica* 'girl'), would.

According to Stahlberg et al. (2012) there are three types of grammatical gender categories in language: grammatical gender languages (like the Romance languages, Germanic languages, and Slavic languages); natural gender languages (like English and Scandanavian languages); and genderless languages (like Finnish, Turkish, and Sinitic languages e.g. Chinese). Gender and linguistic gender asymmetries, or the unequal treatment of men and women through language (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003), are much more visible in grammatical gender languages than in natural gender languages or

genderless languages due to every noun, article, and adjective requiring a gender marking (Hellinger and Bußmann 2001).

To be symmetrical and more gender-fair, Stahlberg et al. (2007) recommend that for languages with grammatical gender, the feminine could be used consistently when referring to female persons, and the masculine when referring specifically to men. The female form is rarely used always when referring to female persons, and all grammatical groups (grammatical gender languages, natural gender languages, and genderless languages) display gender asymmetry. Furthermore, this leaves the problem for those individuals that identify as a nonbinary gender, although this is not acknowledged by many researchers in this literature review (e.g. Hellinger and Bußmann 2001, Stahlberg et al. 2007).

According to Padilla (2016), patriarchal and heterosexual norms are reinforced through the Spanish language. Thus, we have seen an evolution amongst terms like *latino*, from *latino* to *latina/o*, introducing the feminine form first, to *latin@*, including both genders simultaneously, to *latinx* and *latine* now, ridding the term of any gender identity or affirming a nonbinary gender identity. Categories such as *Latina/o* and *Latinx* primarily reference people within US territories because Latin American countries generally favor national origin terms (*peruanx*, *colombian@*, etc.) connecting a person to an individual country (DeGuzmán 2017).

The Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) has been quite vocal about its opposition to the inclusion of a genderless option, in both writing and oral discourse (e.g. Real AcademiaEspañola 2018; @RAEinforma, Feb 22, 2019, shown in Figure 2 below). The RAE is the body that presides, presumably, over prescriptive Spanish grammar, syntax, morphology, and mostly lexicon and is notoriously conservative. As a note, only eleven women have been accepted into the institution in its 300+ years of existence (Vidal-Ortiz and Martínez 2018).

3.   Methodology

The inclusion criteria for this project were: be at least 18 years old, a native or near native speaker (learned Spanish before age five), and have normal or corrected to normal vision and hearing. There was no compensation for participating and the recruitment materials clearly stated that the topic of the project was language and gender. Participants were recruited via outreach on social media, hispanic or *latinx* organizations around Canada, and YouTube. The survey was distributed via Twitter and Facebook and is also distributed to large mailing lists via email, such as the UWO Languages and Cultures departmental mailing list and the mailing list for the Canadian Hispanist Association.

According to Beatty and Salinas (2016: 6) "social media has become an important source of news that influences the examination of society and culture, and its interaction of race, law, power, and privilege." For these reasons, the majority of the recruitment was completed through social media. A corpus of gender inclusive language on YouTube was compiled in preparation for this project, and was used for initial analysis and as a launch point for recruiting participants (Slemp et al. 2019). Additionally, the recruitment was sent to the YouTube channels where videos were found to display inclusive language. From

this corpus, it was determined that Spain and Argentina were the countries where inclusive language is happening the most in Spanish, and these countries were used as hashtags (#Argentina, #España) on social media for the distribution of the survey.

On Facebook and Twitter, the hashtags #lenguajeinclusivo (inclusive language) and #lenguajeygénero (language and gender) were used to help distribute the survey and the posts were shared by various people. The survey was available for over six months and recruitment scripts were sent out multiple times over this period. This allowed for a large number of participants to complete the survey and collect a wide range of responses. Following the survey, participants were invited to complete an interview.

All of the survey data was translated from Spanish to English prior to analysis. The majority of the questions permitted for responses that are either qualitative or are categorical variable responses. The categorical variables allowed for analysis via chi square test of association for independent samples. There were five likert scale questions at the end of the survey, and these permitted a quantitative analysis via one way ANOVA. To complete the statistical analysis, the data was downloaded from Qualtrics and uploaded into Excel, where it was coded and some categories (residence country, birth country, and gender) were collapsed to permit the analysis.

4.   Results

There were 111 responses to the survey in total. Out of these responses, 9 were eliminated because they did not respond past the first question. Of the remaining 102 participants, 45 responded to every question on the survey, and 58 responded to some of the questions. The two variables found to have statistically significant correlations with the survey responses are birth country and gender identity. The remaining demographic variables (residence country, education, age) were not found to have significant effects on survey responses. The survey sample skewed towards young, educated multilinguals. The current paper presents one of the questions with a significant correlation with the categorical variable of birth country from a Chi Square Test of Association.

4.1   Birth country

Table 1 contains the breakdown of participants by birth country, and Figure 1 shows the collapsed categories of birth countries used for statistical analysis.

Table 1. Participants by Birth Country

Spain	11
Argentina	35
Venezuela	2
USA	2
Colombia	37
Mexico	5
Canada	5
Cuba	2
Puerto Rico	1
The Netherlands	1
Total	102

   The birth countries of the participants were then collapsed to allow for statistical analysis. The remaining categories can be seen in the figure below. Colombia and Argentina are left separate from the remaining Latin American countries because they have the most participants in the study. The US and Canada were combined to become the category North America whereas Mexico was grouped with the other Latin American countries since the country's first language is Spanish. Finally, the participant from the Netherlands was excluded from statistical analysis of this variable because there was no adequate way to group their data with that of other countries.
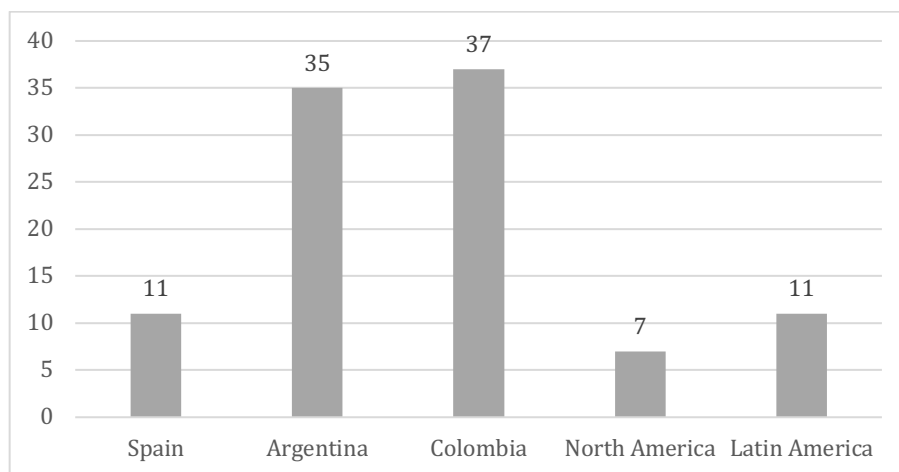
Figure 1. Participants by Collapsed Birth Country Categories

4.2 The correlation between collapsed birth country and type of spoken inclusive language

¿Puede dar un(os) ejemplo(s) del lenguaje inclusivo que usa normalmente al hablar?
'Can you give example(s) of inclusive language that you use normally in speech?'

Table 2. Spoken Inclusive Language (SIL) Code Compared to Collapsed Birth Country Descriptives

Birth Country – collapsed	SIL code						Total
	-e	**-x**	**-a**	**-o**	**a/o**	**N/A**	
Spain	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Argentina	8	1	0	1	1	0	11
LAM	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
NAM	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Colombia	3	0	1	0	2	1	7
Total	11	2	1	1	8	2	25

This question encompasses one of the main questions of this thesis project: how do Spanish speakers choose to incorporate gender inclusive language? There is no clear consensus from this sample, but the innovative morpheme /-e/ is the most popular option. Most of these responses, however, come from Argentina. The second most popular response is to use doublets ("a/o") to represent gender inclusive language in speech, although there is much debate as to whether doublets are inclusive of all genders (Milian 2017). Interestingly, one of the participants stated that they use the masculine generic ("-o") because they feel that it is inclusive of all genders, a claim which has been studied extensively and found that it is not inclusive. Another participant stated that they use a feminine generic ("-a") rather than a masculine generic. Additionally, there were two

participants that selected in the previous question that they did use inclusive language to some extent in their writing, but then in the free response followed up stated *casi no lo uso* ('I almost don't use it') rather than an example. Finally, two people gave responses, such as *todxs* (everyone N.P.), using the innovative marker *-x* and it is unknown how this would actually be pronounced since neither of these participants consented to an interview after completing the survey. This is the question with the fewest participants. Overall, 15 participants responded that they never use spoken inclusive language and 31 people responded that they do use spoken inclusive language in some capacity.

With the Chi Square test of association, shown below in Table 3, we can see that there is a significant relationship between the categorical or nominal variables of birth country and SIL code, with a p < .05.

Table 3. SIL Code Compared to Collapsed Birth Country Test of Association

	Value	df	p
X^2	34.5	20	0.023
N	24		

4.3   Written Inclusive Language

Although the results were not significant or near significant, it is important to mention that for written inclusive language, the following Table 3 displays the frequencies of the types of inclusive language provided by the participants.

Table 3. Frequencies of WIL Code

Code	Counts	% of Total
-x	6	21.4%
-e	11	39.3%
-a	1	3.6%
-@	5	17.9%
None	1	3.6%
a/o	4	14.3%

Similar to spoken inclusive language, the *-e* is the most common response from participants. In contrast, we can see that the *-x* is much more popular in writing than in speech, as the second most popular option. If we combine the categories of *-@* and *a/o*, which both generally indicate a doublet, it would actually be the second most common response from participants, but *-@* is not always orally expressed as a doublet, and these are different inclusive options in written Spanish, so they remain separated.

4.4 Interviews

Two interviews were completed. One of the participants identified as genderfluid, 41-55 years old, and was born and lived in Spain their entire life. The other participant identified as a cisgender woman, 26-40 years old, and was born and lived in Argentina for her entire life. The participant from Spain will be referred to as P1 and the participant from Argentina as P2. Because only two participants agreed to do an interview, comparison between the written and spoken data cannot be extensive. However, responses from the interview participants can be analyzed qualitatively. The participants differ in both of the categorical variables found to have statistical significance in the preceding analysis: gender identity and birth country.

The two participants have a different approach to expressing inclusive language in Spanish. First, P1 stated that they prefer to use the roundabout way of describing someone as their form of inclusive language, utilizing terms like *persona* 'person' or *individuo* 'individual'. In response to the question *¿Es difícil incorporarlo?* ('Is it difficult to incorporate?'), they stated that *es difícil incorporarlo en el lenguaje oral espontáneo. Entonces, como que poco a poco tengo que pensarlo menos y utilizo figuras neutras pero reconozco que ahí sí requieren tiempo. No puedes pensar mucho al hablar y después pensar <<ay mierda>> no lo hice, pero bueno* ('It is difficult to incorporate in oral, spontaneous language. Then, little by little I have to think less and I use neutral figures, but I recognize that it does require time. You cannot think much while speaking and then later think '"aw shit" I didn't do it, but oh well'). From this response we see that, as noted in the literature review, it takes practice and desire to incorporate inclusive language consistently (Sczesny et al. 2015).

P2 stated in the survey that she uses doublets as inclusive language, but that she has recently started incorporating the /-e/ in less formal contexts. This represents the fast changing nature of inclusive language in Argentine Spanish currently. She stated *Yo creo que entre la encuesta y ahora la entrevista, esto es muy mutable y en general yo tiendo utilizar de forma variable depende de la situación comunicativa* ('I believe that between the survey and the interview now, that is very changeable and in general, I have been using variable forms, depending on the communicative situation'). She also stated that doublets are not inclusive and that the /-e/ *me soluciona más de forma más sencilla que al inicio...paulatinamente estoy incorporando más la -e* ('it results for me more, of the more simple form than at the beginning...I am slowly incorporating more the /-e/'). Despite identifying as genderfluid, when faced with the question *Descríbase, usando adjetivos y características descriptivas* ('Describe (clitic) using adjectives and descriptive characteristics), P1 responded with a clarifying question *¿de mí misma? Bueno, pues, soy una persona tranquila…* ('myself: F? Good, well, I am a calm person'). So although this participant identifies as genderfluid, they automatically used the feminine morpheme on adjectives to refer to themself, and then after thinking, began to speak in the roundabout way.

The two participants also agree that the environment surrounding inclusive language is changing. P2 stated *los chicos son pequeños. Ya es muy naturalizado que con la -o no hay femenino. Después no sé qué pasa, si es la e, si no, mi hijo escribe en su*

cuaderno con la -e. Los nenos y las nenas, no, les nenes ('The children M.P. are little. Already it is very naturalized that with the *-o*, there is no feminine. After, I don't know what happens. If it is the *-e* or if not. My son writes in his notebook with the -e. The boys and the girls, no. The children (N)'). It is interesting that this participant still uses the masculine generic *los chicos son pequeños* (and not *les chiques son pequeñes*) while simultaneously acknowledging that it is not inclusive. This participant also stated *aprendemos usar la -o mecánicamente y queremos corregir* ('We learn to use the -o mechanically and we want to correct'). Similarly, when discussing the future of inclusive language, P1 stated *Siendo positiva, pero que poco a poco vamos como que acostumbrando al oído y la lectura porque lo que ya no es posible es aceptar el lenguaje no inclusivo. Al leer un texto o escuchar a alguien expresándose únicamente en el masculino genérico, ya no es soportable* ('I am positive, but little by little we are, like, adjusting the sound and the reading because what is already not possible is accepting non-inclusive language. Reading a text or listening to someone expressing themself solely in the masculine generic, it is not bearable anymore'). Here again, P1 uses the feminine morpheme with an adjective *positiva*, to reference themself.

Finally, both participants express the importance that inclusive language has. P1 stated Es importante, pero cuanto más lo integro, más creo que bueno podemos ir haciendo poco a poco ('It is important, but the more I integrate it, the more I think that well we can go along little by little'). P2 provided a different perspective: muchísimo, me parece super importante como gesto. Porque a ver, no creo que utilizar las dos formas solamente en un conjunto de personas vas a ver un cambio lingüístico... No creo que necesariamente vas a cambiar la realidad de género de las personas, pero sí que visibiliza un conflicto. Entonces me parece importante en ese sentido, de visibilización ('very much, it seems to me super important as a gesture. Because let's see, I do not think that using only the two forms in a group of people you are going to see a linguistic change... I do not think that you are necessarily going to change the gender reality of people, but it does make a conflict visible. So it seems important to me in that sense, of visibility').

Both of the participants from the interviews expressed similar ideas about the importance of inclusive language and that there is a difficulty when describing gender ambiguous or diverse individuals. The majority of their opinions surrounding gender inclusive language in Spanish were similar, despite differing in both of the demographic variables found to have significant correlations with the tested variables, birth country and gender identity.

5.   Conclusion

As expected, participants from Argentina were the largest group of participants. Colombia also had a lot of participants. We expect age, gender, and country, to some extent (e.g. Slemp et al. 2019) to have significant correlations with the tested variables (e.g. Kirkham and Moore 2013, Queen 2013). Higher education could have an effect on analysis due to more exposure, either increasing awareness for gender diversity or increasing prescriptive grammar. Birth country has an effect, but residence country does not. The following variables were not found to be significant in neither the Chi Square Test of Association nor

the One-Way ANOVA: age, education, knowledge of another language, and residence country. Education was not a significant variable, most likely because one of the ways that the survey was distributed was via mass email mailing lists through the university and assorted academic conferences, thus biasing the sampling towards those with higher levels of education. The knowledge of another language did not have a significant effect in any of the analysis either. Over 80% of the participants reported knowledge of another language, and only three people reported not knowing English in some capacity. This, again, is most likely due to the recruitment through the university and conferences based in Canada. According to the literature review, age would be expected to have a significant effect in the analysis (Kirkham and Moore 2013), but it did not in this study. In fact, 70% of the participants were under the age of 40. This is most likely due to the recruitment via social media and in the university setting, skewing the sampling to favour younger respondents. The survey participants were young, educated, and multilingual, which does not reflect the true Spanish speaking population. It is unclear why residence country does not have any significant correlation with the tested variables, but that could be investigated by a future study.

To answer the research question guiding this paper, this project found that -*e* was the most popular inclusive language strategy in both writing and speech. In writing, -*x* was the second most popular option, but in speech it is doublets. It makes sense that the -*x* is more popular in writing than doublets because it is a shorter way to be more inclusive. There are two participants who respond that they prefer to use forms with -*x* in speech, but they did not fill out the necessary form to conduct an interview, and therefore we do not know how this grapheme would actually be pronounced when used as an inclusive marker. It is not surprising that in speech, the second most popular option is doublets as that is the form of inclusivity that has been around the longest, and is the only institutionally sanctioned way to have gender inclusivity (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1988, Ramírez Vélez 2009, Real Academia Española 2018). In speech, it is arguably the easiest to incorporate because, although wordy, it is simpler to tag on the feminine form than it is to create a new word with the -*e* innovation. However, it is difficult for speakers to consistently incorporate this morpheme when speaking.

One of the main goals of this thesis is to compare spoken inclusive language to written inclusive language because of the discrepancy in pronunciation in the gender inclusive options that are present in Spanish (e.g. Guidotti-Hernandez 2017, Vidal-Ortíz and Martínez 2018, amongst others). This is not possible with the present thesis project because only two participants completed interviews, due to the constraints from the ethics protocol requirements.

The method of recruitment via social media and through academic organizations is likely tied to the disproportionate amount of young participants and the higher level of education, which does not represent Spanish speakers as a population. However, we would expect gender inclusivity to be more prominent among young people (Kirkham and Moore 2013), so perhaps this also contributed to the proportion of participants under 40. Furthermore, in future studies we would want to increase the number of participants overall. This thesis contains responses from a variety of individuals, of different gender

identities, different nationalities, and different ages, but the results could be made more significant were we able to have higher participation in both the survey and the interview.

The results show that the *-e* is the most popular inclusive language option currently, but we cannot predict whether the *-e* morpheme will be the solution adopted into Spanish, or if there is a future for inclusive language at all, even though the interview participants are optimistic. It might be suggestive of future trends, as we can most likely expect the *-e* to continue to spread. It is, however, apparent that the binary system for semantic gender is not entirely adequate for many Spanish speakers, as demonstrated by two thirds of participants responding that they had, at some point, had difficulty describing someone's gender identity in Spanish. Despite the popularity of the *-e*, there is no consensus for how to best incorporate gender inclusive language as other options were almost as popular.

The situation surrounding gender inclusive language in Spanish is rapidly changing. Prior to the 1980s, the masculine form for nouns (and modifiers) with human referents was used as a generic form without much pushback. Around the 1980s, some language guidelines were provided by government agencies and organizations (e.g. Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1988). Perception studies began around the same time and found that the use of the masculine generic was not inclusive (e.g. Hyde 1984, Jacobson and Insko 1985). Women, and other gender minorities, do not feel included by use of the masculine generic. For this reason, organizations began to recommend including the feminine form also when addressing or referring to groups (e.g. Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1988, UNESCO 1999). For a time, that was sufficient but it has not been enforced. Some language institutions argue that it is not necessary because they claim the masculine generic is inclusive (Real Academia Española 2018) even though perception studies say it is not (e.g. Flaherty 2001, Nissen 2013, amongst others).

A majority of Spanish speakers surveyed in this study are aware that describing gender identity in Spanish is difficult, but there is no real consensus on how best to incorporate inclusive language. In this current snapshot, the *-e* is the most popular option. This could be a fad, or another inclusive option can appear that will eclipse the *-e* in the future, just as the *-e* has eclipsed both the *-x*, the *-@*, and doublets. The *-e* was the most popular morpheme from participants for both spoken and written inclusive language, despite it being the most recent to appear. The *-e* or the *-x*, or any other inclusive option, could come to dominate the Spanish language, but without social change occurring concurrently, gender inclusive language could remain in the periphery of the Spanish speaking world.

This seems to be, linguistically, the optimal morpheme because in the lexicon *-e* exists already, and phonologically it is easiest to incorporate into Spanish syllable structure. Furthermore, it is not as wordy as incorporating doublets. However, this project is a synchronic snapshot and more studies need to be conducted to examine the situation of gender inclusive language in Spanish over the coming years.

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