

Title: Reactions to gender-inclusive language in Spanish on Twitter and YouTube

Authors: Katie Slemp and Martha Black, Western University

An academic, linguistic and cultural movement has emerged in recent years that both critiques the binary semantic gender system of Spanish and proposes that the Spanish language become more inclusive of all gender identities (de Onis, 2017). As such, a variety of linguistic innovations have appeared to mark gender inclusive language in Spanish, such as doublets (*chicos y chicas* ‘boys and girls’), the morpheme /-x/ (*chicxs*), the morpheme /-@/ (*chic@s*), and the morpheme /-e/ (*chiques*), presented in Table 1. Given that these innovative forms are occurring in both speech and text, online social networks provide a valuable lens through which to observe and analyze recent gender-inclusive innovations. This study examines the official positions of the RAE (*Real Academia Española*) and the AAL (*Academia Argentina de las Letras*) (Real Academia Española, 2018; Moure, 2019) in order to compare their prescriptive vision of semantic gender to a descriptive account of how Spanish speakers actually integrate gender-inclusive language on YouTube and Twitter. We use the YouTube video corpus of Slemp et al. (2019) to analyze 27 YouTube videos, for a total of 2,347 comments, in addition to 20 tweets, for a total of 278 replies. Our results show that both social media platforms present the four aforementioned innovations, although there are notable differences in the relative frequencies observed for each innovation type between YouTube and Twitter, as shown in Table 1. Our results further indicate that Twitter users are not as welcoming of gender-inclusive language as Youtube users; that is, the replies we analyze show an average of only 33% of positive comments on Twitter, while Youtube comments show an average of 76% of positive reactions, as shown in Table 2. From our preliminary qualitative and quantitative analyses, we demonstrate and discuss how the semantic gender system of Spanish may be in a state of transition from a purely binary system, oriented towards the masculine form as neuter, towards a more dynamic, less binary, and inclusive system to accommodate diverse gender identities, although this transition occurs amid negativity and without a unified response on how best to represent inclusivity.

Table 1. Summary of observed gender inclusive innovations on Twitter and YouTube.

Innovation Type	Total number of Tweets (n=20)	% Total on Twitter	Total number of videos (n=27)	% Total on YouTube
doublets	4	17%	19	70%
/-e/	12	50%	10	37%
/-x/	3	13%	19	70%
/@/	5	20%	12	44%

Table 2. Summary of reactions to gender inclusive language on Twitter and YouTube. Standard deviations (SD) are provided in parentheses.

Social Network	Average No. of likes (SD)	Average No. of re-tweets (SD)	Average No. of comments per tweet/video (SD)	Type of comment		
				Positive (+) (SD)	Neutral (/) (SD)	Negative (-) (SD)
Twitter	10,181 (20,665)	2,541 (4,616)	296 (5,929)	33% (3.8)	17% (2.7)	50% (7.9)
YouTube	359 (1,466)	n/a	87 (348)	76% (25.16)	16% (9.93)	8% (25.52)

Keywords: gender-inclusive language; Spanish; language change; prescriptive-descriptive grammar; social networks; YouTube; Twitter

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