Language Attitudes towards the use of gender-inclusive language in Spanish on Twitter

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Research into gender inclusive language in Spanish has demonstrated that inclusive language generally appears in four forms: doublets, *-@*, *-x*, and *-e* (Slemp 2020). Spanish traditionally is considered a Romance language with binary grammatical gender (Loporcaro 2017). Nouns (and determiners and adjectives) in Spanish, including nouns that refer to people, exhibit binary grammatical gender where nouns are masculine if ended in *-o* and feminine if ended in *-a*, as in (1). Feminist movements critiqued the widely embraced norm of addressing a mixed group of individuals with the masculine generic (2b). Starting in the 1980s, feminist movements have urged the use of *-@* (which indicates both *-o* and *-a*, simultaneously, but is unpronounceable as is) and/or doublets to indicate both traditional gender identities, men and women (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1988). Examples (2a) and (2c) demonstrate *-@* and doublets, respectively. As our understanding of social gender roles and gender identities has been evolving recently, inclusive forms such as *-@* and doublets have received criticism for not being inclusive of genders that lie outside the traditional male-female binary. For this reason, other inclusive markers have arisen in Spanish.

1.   *el alumno* M.SG.   *la alumna* F.SG.
       'the student' (male)   'the student' (female)
2.   a. *l@s alumn@s* MFN.PL.
              b. *los alumnos* M.PL. 'the students'
              c. *los alumnos y las alumnas* ('the male students and the female students')
3.   *lxs alumnxs* N.PL. 'the students'
4.   *les alumnes* N.PL. 'the students'

The marker *-x* (3) has begun to appear in written discourse around the mid 2000s, as a non-gendered alternative, with the *-x* effectively eliminating any gendered denotation (Milian 2017). Finally, the *-e* (4) appeared shortly after *-x* and is rapidly becoming the most popular option for expressing nonbinary gender inclusivity (Slemp et al. 2019; Slemp 2020). On social media websites, such as Twitter, one can find numerous occurrences of the various inclusive forms. Social media provides insights into how language is used (Higa & Dunham 2019), although it is not flawless; Hargittai & Jennrich (2016) report that social media influencers are generally highly educated, young, and of higher socioeconomic status. There is little to no research on language attitudes towards the use of gender-inclusive language in Spanish, although studies exist for other languages (e.g. Jost & Kay 2005; Carney et al. 2008; Sczesny et al. 2015).

The present study compiled a corpus of tweets published in November 2020 that contained the inclusive markers *-@*, *-x*, and *-e* in common words such as *tod_s* ('all') and *amig_s* ('friends'). Based on this data, hypothetical tweets were constructed that fell into four different categories, indicated by the author of the tweet: business, personal, academic, and political. These hypothetical tweets were built into a language attitudes survey that was distributed via Twitter with the hashtags *#lenguajeinclusivo* ('#inclusivelanguage') and *#lenguajeygénero* ('#languageandgender'). Initial findings indicate that language attitudes for each type of inclusive marker and category of tweet are positive, earning a score of at least 2.5 out of 5. Language academies, such as the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE 2018) remain steadfastly opposed to inclusive language, despite positive public reaction. Statistical analysis indicates a significant relationship between gender identity and language attitudes towards the use of inclusive language in the political category.

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