

## **Evaluative discourses in the debate of the feminization of agentives in Spain.**

Historically, the feminization of agentives in Spain has found strong opposition from different groups of society (Bengoechea 2006). While each country has its own stance on inclusive language, the *Real Academia Española* (RAE, Spanish Royal Academy), and certain political groups, act as if grammatical gender is an immutable fact about language. Therefore, the naming of women holding positions previously reserved for men, or included in the generic male form of address, causes academic, political and social debate.

Social media emerged as a new democratic space allowing users to voice publicly their views on subjects previously limited to mass media. This situation has led to a democratization of discourse (Bou-Franch 2013) since ordinary people can contribute and transform discourses traditionally associated with those in power. Over the past few years, the microblogging site Twitter has become one of the most popular digital platforms and has changed how people communicate and relate to the world (Zappavigna 2018). Twitter is used by the elites as well as by ordinary people to engage in socio political debate and activities and for politicians and institutions (i.e., RAE) themselves, so they can shape public opinion. The polarization of public opinion on this matter relates directly with populist approaches to communication (Breeze 2019), and the rudeness and violation of convention of populist politicians (Bolívar 2018). In this case it also applies to ordinary people as Twitter is characterized by simplicity, impulsivity and incivility (Ott 2017), making it an ideal platform for the expression of strong socio-political views.

This study aims to examine evaluative discourses employed by Twitter users engaged in the debate of the feminization of agentives in Spain in a corpus of 15,000 tweets, subdivided in three groups: 1) Authorities (RAE, Fundéu), 2) Ideologists (political parties and media outlets from different ideological leanings), and 3) Twitter users in their interactions with above mentioned groups. In particular it will look into the use of agentive doubling, feminization of the agentive and the explicit mention of both sexes. The study seeks to investigate not only language, but other semiotic devices linked to Twitter's affordances, in particular memes and GIFs and it will explore the following two questions: 1. How are these discourses employed to resist feminist claims for the feminization of agentives? 2. What patterns and evaluative resources are used to discursively construct anti feminization strategies?

This present study combines corpus linguistics (CL) tools (Baker et al. 2008; Alcántara-Plá 2020) and a feminist critical discourse analysis approach (FCDA, Lazar 2005) to identify the most frequent ideological discourses in the corpus. Moreover, the study draws on Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005) to examine the linguistic resources employed to construct these discourses on Twitter. FCDA is used with the aim to examine the discursive (re)production, negotiation and resistance of gendered dynamics and ideologies of power and dominance, which determine how female agency is portrayed. In this study appraisal theory is concerned with how users apply evaluative language to express attitudinal meanings. In terms of CL tools, the use of Sketch Engine allows to study a large data corpus in order to identify recurring patterns of discourse which are naturalized.

The results show firstly that the Twitter affordances studied (GIFs and memes) contribute to reorganize and reinforce traditional discursive strategies. Secondly, the most prominent characteristic of the ideological stance of those opposed to the inclusive discourse is that of anti-politeness, through which they oppose and resist the equal representation of women in the Spanish language in Spain. Thirdly, exists a difference in the way users react to proposed strategies depending on whether the proponent is female or male, in both the use of language and other semiotic devices. This finding highlights the misogynistic layer that permeates Spanish society and that actually causes the proposals to fail. It can be claimed that the gender of the proponent adds to the polarization of public opinion and

the disdain for the measures, attributed to what is referred to as an agenda of the gendered ideology of the feminists.

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## Contact

Sara Rafael-Cruz  
PhD Candidate  
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid  
sara.rafaeldelacruz@estudiante.uam.es