¿Nos hacemos un/una selfie con la/el tablet? Cross-Linguistic Lexical Influence, Gender Assignment and Linguistic Policy in Spanish[1]

¿Nos hacemos un/una selfie con la/el tablet?
Influencia croslingüística léxica, asignación de género gramatical
y política lingüística en español

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Abstract

One of the immediate consequences of cross-linguistic lexical influence in languages that have an explicit gender system is the need to assign a gender to newly borrowed terms. In this paper, we analyze gender assignment in two recent technology-related borrowings in Spanish, 'tablet' and 'selfie', paying particular attention to the morphological, phonological and semantic factors that play a role in this process. We explain how these two words have been adopted and adapted by the Spanish language, and how various language institutions have attempted to establish policies to control or limit their use. In so doing, we demonstrate that sociolinguistic factors, such as the attitudes of Spanish language institutions vis-à-vis lexical borrowings from English, can contribute to understanding the phenomenon of the assignment of gender to Anglicisms in Spanish and their integration in the language.

Resumen

Uno de los efectos inmediatos de la influencia croslingüística léxica en lenguas que poseen un sistema de género gramatical explícito es la necesidad de asignar un género concreto a los préstamos de otras lenguas. En este artículo, analizamos la asignación de género gramatical en español a dos préstamos lingüísticos recientes del ámbito tecnológico, *tablet* y *selfie*, prestando atención al papel que pueden desempeñar los factores morfológicos, fonológicos y semánticos en el proceso de incorporación a la lengua. Explicamos cómo estos dos préstamos han sido adoptados y adaptados en español y cómo diferentes instituciones de la lengua han intentado establecer políticas encaminadas a controlar o limitar su uso. Del mismo modo, también demostramos que para entender el proceso de asignación de género gramatical de los anglicismos en español y su integración en la lengua es necesario considerar además factores sociolingüísticos, como las actitudes hacia los préstamos lingüísticos del inglés por parte de las instituciones de la lengua.

Palabras Clave: Influencia croslingüística léxica, asignación de género gramatical, género transitorio, anglicismos, préstamos lingüísticos, instituciones de la lengua, política lingüística, lenguas en contacto.

INTRODUCTION

How do official language institutions attempt to regulate the introduction of new words into a language? In this study, we focus on the assignment of gender to technology-related words in Spanish and the role that language institutions can potentially play in this process. To justify our choice of semantic field, we begin with a brief chronological overview of technological Anglicisms and their influence on the Spanish lexicon, and that of other languages, followed by a discussion of previous studies on gender assignment. We focus particularly on the attribution of gender to loanwords and the morphological, phonological and semantic factors conditioning this process. In addition, we explain the concept of 'transitional gender,' defined as the period of ambivalence between gender categories that borrowings undergo when they are first integrated into a language.

We use the particular examples of the words 'tablet' and 'selfie'[2] as case studies to illustrate some of the processes Anglicisms undergo as they become part of the Spanish lexicon.[3] The use of these two terms has recently seen a rapid rise in many languages. Initially used in Spanish in various ways, these words were either adopted as foreignisms in their original forms ('tablet', 'selfie'), or were adapted phono-semantically (*tableta*) or orthographically (*selfi*), due in part to recommendations by language institutions. Spanish speakers are currently using these words as direct borrowings with both genders (*el/la/un/una tablet*, *el/la/un/una selfie*), an ambivalence that presents a challenge in terms of gender-based grammatical agreement and other aspects related to their use in discourse. In addition, the composition of these two words poses interesting questions in the context of the Spanish gender system, including the role of phonetic factors in gender assignment, given that both 'tablet'

and 'selfie' are disyllabic words, end in unstressed syllables, and possess atypical terminal endings in Spanish (–*t* and –*ie* pronounced /t/ and /i/ respectively). We present a case study on the words 'tablet' and 'selfie', and analyse the actions of language institutions with regard to these loanwords and their impact on how the gender of foreignisms is determined.

Comparing the use of these two words by Spanish speakers to the way they are represented in dictionaries and similar resources allows us to examine the way language institutions attempt to influence how language is used. For instance, the word 'tablet' was registered in the latest edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (DLE, 2014) as *tableta*, while 'selfie' was not included at all. As we will demonstrate, the adoption and adaptation of these words into the Spanish language reflect how language institutions react and make recommendations on vocabulary use. These actions are not always completely aligned with how speakers use the language. Indeed, tracing the journey of these two terms through Spanish is a revealing exercise that can shed light on the process of integrating loanwords from English. More importantly, this analysis also contributes a sociolinguistic perspective by uncovering the attitudes of language institutions towards foreignisms and the role these attitudes can play in gender assignment.

1. Lexical borrowing and technological vocabulary

1.1. Loanwords as a reflection of technological progress

An oft-discussed linguistic topic, both in the popular press and in scholarly publications, is the overwhelming lexical influence of English on the world's languages in recent decades. From Mandarin Chinese to Polish, from French to Modern Hebrew, languages spoken throughout the globe are borrowing English words and concepts by the thousand. One domain in which English holds considerable sway is that of science and technology, particularly in the dominant areas of mobile computing and communications (Gerding, Fuentes, Gómez & Kotz, 2012).

However, the borrowing of words and meanings has always been a productive means of lexical innovation for virtually every language. Throughout history, a strong motivating factor for loanword transmission has been the need to fill lexical gaps produced by new scientific concepts and technological inventions and innovations. The Romans adopted several Greek loanwords that later became the basis for the Latinate scientific terms that we use today (Holmes & Schultz, 1938). In the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, a number of European languages borrowed several philosophical, scientific and medical terms that originated in the intellectual centres of the Arabic-speaking world (Daulton, 2011). From the 17th until well into the early 20th century, French held the distinction of being the international language of diplomacy and scientific communication (Janson, 2002), and thus an important source of

loanwords for various scientific disciplines and emerging technologies such as photography and cinema.

English itself had minimal impact on other languages for most of its history, and its current role as the world's foremost word donor is a relatively recent development (Filipovic, 1996). Especially after the Norman invasion of 1066, English was mainly a word importer rather than an exporter, assimilating a large number of foreign loans from sources such as Latin and French.

It was only towards the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century that the situation began to change. Interest in England and in English culture began to spread throughout Europe, starting in France, then extending to Italy and the rest of the continent. This 18th-century 'Anglomania' (Graf, 1911) led to the adoption of English words into French and subsequently into other fashionable European languages, such as Italian.

The position of English as a source of loanwords was further consolidated in the 19th century, with the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. Along with the enormous technological, economic and social changes originating from the British Isles came the English terms used to identify and describe novel ideas and objects corresponding to this brave new world. English began to contribute loanwords to a widening range of European tongues, from Germanic languages like Danish, Dutch, German, Norwegian and Swedish; to Romance languages such as French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish; as well as Slavonic languages such as Russian, Polish and Croatian (Filipovic, 1996).

Clearly, British political, economic and technological power in the 19th and early 20th centuries fuelled the rise of English as a global language, and the degree of cultural and economic contact with Great Britain ensured a continuous flow of loanwords from English to other languages. While the dominance of English might have seen itself threatened by the subsequent decline of the British Empire after the two World Wars, the erosion of British influence happened to coincide with the rise of a new English-speaking giant: the United States. This nation, which produced so many advances in science and technology, led the charge towards the globalization and informatisation that characterise 21st-century society. In a sense, the transfer of power from Britain to the United States paralleled the shift from mechanical to information technology.

The current position of English as the world's lingua franca is driven by two major forces originating in the United States: the Hollywood effect, with English-medium products propagated through technologies such as films, recorded music, and broadcast media looming large in the cultural landscape; and the Silicon Valley phenomenon, in which American computer- and Internet-based technologies

dominate international communications and the global dissemination of knowledge (Xue & Zuo, 2013).

The prevalence of English in computer terminology is clearly manifested in a significant number of English neologisms that appear as loanwords in various other languages, either directly or through translation or transliteration. A look through the entries in Görlach's Dictionary of European Anglicisms (2001), which covers 16 different European languages, reveals a variety of computer-related borrowings that penetrated these languages from the early days of modern digital computing in the 1960s (e.g., bit, digital, disk, hardware) and 1970s (e.g., BASIC, byte, CAD, debugger, firmware) through the growth of personal computing in the 1980s (e.g., boot, cursor, desktop, directory, floppy disk) and the advent of the Internet in the 1990s (e.g., Internet, home page, shareware, update).

The worldwide influence of English on computer jargon is also evident in the word 'computer' itself, which has gained currency in varying incarnations in languages as diverse as Albanian (*kompjuter*), Azerbaijani (*kompüter*), Hausa (*kwamfuta)*, Zulu (*computer*), Hindi (*Kampyūṭara*), Italian (*computer*), German (*Computer*), Lithuanian (*kompiuteris*), Russian (*komp'yuter*), Georgian (*kompiuteruli*), Kannada (*Kampyūṭar*), Japanese (*Konpyūta*), Lao (*khomphiuatoe*) and Tagalog (*computer*).

In the 21st century, the progressive miniaturization of hardware and the increase in wireless connectivity have made portable, handheld, Internet-enabled computers the most popular form of digital technology. Indeed, borrowing words from English has allowed other cultures to keep abreast of current technological trends, as many Anglicisms of recent exportation to other languages refer to specific devices and services that enable electronic mobile communication (e.g., smartphone, tablet, SMS, Twitter, Google, Facebook), as well as to the highly specialised lingo used in new forms of human interaction shaped by social media (e.g., emoji, LOL, tweet, IMHO).

Considering the speed at which technology is advancing, borrowings also reflect progress in the technological domain *per se*, given how such terms tend to be time-specific, referencing a certain kind of technology at a given moment, only to be re-borrowed with a different meaning for later innovation. According to Görlach's Dictionary (2001)*,* the word 'buffer' was acquired by European languages in the 19th century as a direct borrowing or calque to mean "railway device that protects against or reduces the effect of an impact" –and once again became a widely used loan a century later, this time signifying a "temporary memory area to aid data transfer between programs operating at different speeds, etc." (Görlach, 2001: 38). Similarly, the Anglicism 'mac(k)intosh' has at various times been used to refer to a type of raincoat, a variety of apple, and now also a brand of computer.

1.2. Forms of borrowing in the domain of technology

Borrowings in the realm of technology follow the same mechanisms of transfer as those in other semantic fields. Technological Anglicisms can be imported wholesale, with form and meaning bundled together. Examples of such direct borrowings are 'email' and 'blog', which were incorporated exactly in this form into Czech, German, Portuguese, and several other languages. At other times, loanwords have undergone some formal adaptation following the orthographic or morphological rules of the receiving language, as can be observed in the expressions *mobilni telefoni* ('mobile phone') in Serbian, *spamer* ('spammer') in Russian, *cliquer* ('to click') in French, and *googeln* ('to google') in German (Maxwell, 2006).

Another means of borrowing is through calquing or loan translation, whereby each word of an English expression is translated literally into the host language, such as in the French *intelligence artificielle* 'artificial intelligence' and the Dutch *thuispagina* 'homepage' and *vuurwal* 'firewall.' Loanwords can also be combined with native words to make hybrids, like the Danish *Blogosfæren* 'blogosphere' and the Italian *banca online* 'online banking.' Loans are also often selective, like the polysemous English words 'chip', 'display' and 'file,' usually borrowed only in their computer-related senses of 'a microchip,' 'a computer screen,' and 'collection of digitally stored data,' respectively. Borrowing can also lead to semantic extension, as in the case of the Serbian Anglicism *provajder* 'provider,' which originally meant an Internet service provider, but later also came to signify a vendor of homemade food or drink (Maxwell, 2006).

Finally, there are the pseudo-Anglicisms, or loanwords that are English in form but carrying meanings or uses that are not readily understandable to native English speakers (Furiassi & Gottlieb, 2015). Some examples of this borrowing phenomenon are *Handy,* the German word for a mobile phone (Onysko 2007); the French, Italian (see Furiassi, 2010) and Spanish expression 'zapping', which indicates the action of quickly changing television channels (Rodríguez González, 2013); and the Hebrew word tokbek, from 'talkback', a comment on a blog or online news site.

The form an Anglicism takes when incorporated into another language depends in large part on structural factors: on how the receiving language resembles or differs from the English linguistic system (Filipovic, 1996). It must also be pointed out that external considerations such as the general attitude of a language community towards foreignisms do play a role. Languages such as Italian and Dutch have generally been more receptive to words of foreign origin, and consequently, the technological vocabulary of today's Italian and Dutch speakers is marked by direct English borrowings such as 'wifi', 'laptop', 'podcast', and 'wiki'. On the other hand, the lexical protectionism practiced by more conservative languages such as Spanish and French results in fewer unadapted Anglicisms and more transliterations and loan translations

(Maxwell, 2006). For instance, 'email' entered Dutch and Italian as 'email' and was adapted as *courrier électronique* in French and *correo electrónico* in Spanish.

These attitudes regarding loanwords are also subject to regional variation. In the case of Spanish, the peninsular European variety of the language tends to be more conservative in its stance towards foreignisms -although it constantly creates pseudo-Anglicisms, such as 'gin tonic' instead of 'gin and tonic' (Rodríguez González, 2013) – while its many varieties spoken in America are far more open to the wholesale integration of meaning and form directly from other languages, especially English. In Mexican Spanish, and in many other Latin American varieties of the language, for instance, 'laptop' is most commonly used with the feminine article, *una/la laptop* (Rodríguez González, 2017), and is perfectly acceptable and used by people of all ages. In Peninsular Spanish, however, *ordenador portátil*, or just *portátil*, are the most common ways to refer to a 'portable computer.'

Attitudes towards borrowings are also susceptible to change, as in the case of Polish. During the Communist era when there was more resistance to English, Polish Anglicisms were usually transliterated (e.g., *'bite'* became *bajt* and 'scanner' became *skaner*). This tendency can be seen in the title of a popular Polish technology magazine from the 1980s titled *Bajtek*. However, the more recent trend has been for English borrowings to maintain their original spelling as they are adopted into Polish (e.g., notebook, on-line, DVD) (Maxwell, 2006). The same protectionism towards language was in place in Spain in the 1940s during Franco's regime as illustrated in the replacement of English sports terminology by Spanish equivalents, e.g., match, back and speaker becoming *encuentro*, *defensa* and *locutor*, respectively (Rodríguez González, 2002).

From this brief chronological overview we can conclude that technological advancements are an important motivation for lexical borrowing, which has become even more vital in this age of rapid innovation. Because of the predominance of English in science, technology and all forms of media, it seems reasonable to suppose that a wide variety of the world's languages will be importing English loanwords in ever-increasing numbers. These languages will assimilate borrowings at a far greater speed than before, thanks to the almost instantaneous global dissemination of information. Such an influx of Anglicisms will have an impact on not just the lexical stores, but also on the grammatical systems of host languages, despite their clear differences from English. Even though it usually takes some time for morphological changes to install themselves in a language, such changes are now being subjected to considerable pressure in the semantic domain of technology, where the need to adapt is more urgent than ever. The technologies we considered cutting-edge only fifteen years ago are now obsolete, replaced by newer ones with their corresponding jargon. How do slow-changing morphological components evolve in order to keep pace with a fast-moving lexical element such as technology-related borrowings? What are the

factors influencing these changes? These are the questions we aim to answer as we focus on a syntactic category closely interconnected with lexis: grammatical gender.

2. Gender assignment

2.1. Gender assignment in Spanish

Gender is a grammatical category that divides nouns into two distinct classes: 'masculine' for male nouns, and 'feminine' for female nouns, with 'neuter' a third possible group for nouns that are neither. Gender is often referred to using the more specific term 'grammatical gender,' to distinguish it from the 'natural gender' typically determined by biological sex. Thus, although girls are biologically female, the German word for *girl, Mädchen,* is grammatically neuter (Matthews, 2014).

The Spanish language is among the large number of the world's languages that have grammatical gender. Like all Romance languages, it has a gender system that classifies nouns mostly as either masculine or feminine, and it makes explicit use of this categorization in order to establish relations of agreement with other grammatical elements such as adjectives, definite and indefinite articles, demonstratives and quantifiers.

The assignment of gender has been studied from different perspectives and in various languages and contexts. In their attempts to discern similarities across gender assignment systems, Ibrahim (1973), Corbett (1991), and Thornton (2009), among others, have formulated theoretical approaches as to how this process relates to the morphological, phonological and semantic aspects of words, bearing in mind the particularities of individual languages. Other studies have concentrated specifically on the notion of gender in Spanish. In a book targeted at teachers of the language, Bull (1965), as discussed in Clegg (2010), studied patterns useful for systematizing the Spanish gender system, thereby facilitating the acquisition of the language for non-native speakers. He found that words ending in *–a*, *–d*, *–ción*, *–sis*, and *–itis* tend to be feminine 98% of the time, whereas words ending in other graphemes are normally assigned the masculine gender. Bull's initial research was later complemented by Bergen (1978), who added the endings: *–ie*, *–umbre*, and *–z* to the list of typical feminine word endings (see Clegg (2010) for a discussion).

By contrast, the rules of gender attribution are not quite as clear-cut for Spanish words of foreign origin. Some studies indicate the widespread use of the masculine as the unmarked or default gender for loanwords (see Rodríguez González, 1980; Prado, 1982; Rodríguez Segura, 1999; Morin, 2010), a feature Spanish has in common with many other Indo-European and Afroasiatic languages (Aikhenvald, 2004). This general rule notwithstanding, the assignment of gender to a noun originally alien to that language can still create doubt in Spanish speakers, causing a hesitation that can affect the syntactic relationship between the noun in question and other grammatical

elements. This is especially evident in the case of borrowings from English, a language whose gender system has completely eroded, leaving as its only gendered forms those pronouns referring to animate beings or personified inanimate nouns. As Clegg (2010: 5) notes, in view of this fundamental difference between the source and host languages:

> "[a challenge is created] when an English-origin word is used in Spanish. In order for the word to be used by Spanish speakers, it must be assigned a specific gender, either masculine or feminine so that Spanish agreement rules can be followed."

This need to ascribe gender to a borrowed word that does not have one in its language of origin makes English loanwords a particularly interesting type of borrowing to examine in Spanish.

In this study, we use the definition of 'Anglicism' provided by Gottlieb (2006: 198-199) in his discussion of linguistic influence:

> "any individual or systemic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired or boosted by English models, used in intralingual communication in a language other than English."

This definition is key to our analysis, since we consider both the 'adoption' of the Anglicisms 'tablet' and 'selfie' in Spanish, as well as the 'adaptation' of these loanwords as *tableta* and *selfi* or (*autofoto*), as a direct result of official linguistic policy.

Several studies have focused specifically on the designation of gender to Spanish Anglicisms. In their investigation of various aspects of gender assignment of loanwords in language contact situations in Spanish, Poplack, Pousada and Sankoff (1982) analysed English nouns borrowed into both Puerto Rican Spanish and Montreal French, paying special attention to how language contact affected the lexicon. They also considered intergenerational patterns as they studied the phenomenon of gender attribution in both adults and children. To explore language contact in a different medium, Sánchez (1995) carried out a comparative analysis of English borrowings in the Spanish and Mexican press. Smead (2000) turned his attention to gender assignment in Chicano Anglicisms while, more recently, Clegg (2010) studied native Spanish speakers' intuition in allocating gender to nouns. To do so, he conducted an experiment with invented words with selected terminal phonemes, concluding that the meaning of a word and its function do not necessarily have a direct influence on how gender is determined, as it was the terminal phoneme which was found to play an essential role in the gender assignment system.

These studies have shown the various issues that arise when specifying a gender for foreign borrowings. These loanwords can differ from language to language and "have important implications for attempts to determine the structure of the lexicon"

(Corbett, 1991: 8). Poplack et al. (1982) identified the following major determinants of gender attribution in Spanish and French, which we will now exemplify using Anglicisms included in the 23rd edition of the DLE (2014). The factor that they found most predictive of gender is the physiological sex of the animate referent: for instance, *internauta,* a word derived from English 'internaut' 'Internet user,' can be *el internauta* or *la internauta* depending on whether the Internet user is male or female. Another parameter includes the phonological shape of the word, as when certain terminal phonemes of the original language are linked to a specific gender in the host language, e.g., 'jogging' < *el jogging* (loanwords ending in *–ing* tend to be masculine in Spanish). Suffixal analogy can also function as a factor. For instance, some borrowings adopt a specific gender in the host language because of an analogy with other similar-ending words, e.g., 'connectivity' < *la conectividad.*[4] A loanword may also be assigned a specific suffix in the receiving language because of its intended primary meaning, e.g., 'zapping' < *el zapeo.*[5] A final means of establishing gender for Anglicisms is analogical: giving a borrowing the same gender as a semantic equivalent in the host language, for instance, 'web page' > *la (página) web.*

It should be noted that while these are all factors relating to phonological, morphological or semantic properties of loanwords, what we aim to show in this study is that there are extralinguistic factors that also come into play in the gender assignment process.

2.2. Transitional gender in Spanish

As previously mentioned, there is a tendency for Anglicisms and other foreignisms that refer to non-living things to take the masculine gender in Spanish (see Prado, 1982; Morin, 2010). This trend is demonstrated by a number of technology-related words such as *el blog*, *el buffer*, *el byte*, *el chip*, *el clic*, *el driver*, *el e-mail, el hardware*, *el laptop*, *el pendrive*, *el píxel* or *pixel*, *el software*, *el router* (see Morin, 2006).

However, not all Spanish Anglicisms conform to this generalization, as there are many instances of problematic nouns. One notable example is the word *Internet,* which the latest edition of the DLE lists as both masculine and feminine (DLE, 2014). When such a new loanword arrives, some speakers will attempt to disambiguate its gender by resorting to compositional analogies with the morphological and phonological configuration of other similar words, often based on the terminal phoneme (e.g., *el chalet*). This would suggest that the appropriate form is masculine, *el Internet.* Others will establish a semantic connection with the generic meaning of the word in question, such as *la red* for 'network,' which would imply a feminine gender, *la Internet.* This example demonstrates that analogical gender or concept association (Corbett, 1991) is only one of many factors that determine gender in Spanish.

The likely result of any gender ambivalence is that words will undergo a phase of 'transitional gender,' during which they are used both as a masculine and a feminine

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noun until one of the two genders prevails over the other. However, it may also happen that both forms continue to coexist in the language. Such cases of "instability in gender assignment in double/multiple gender nouns which are used with more than one agreement without any difference in meaning" is called 'vacillation' in gender assignment by Kilarski (2004).

The phenomenon of transitional gender can occur both with unmodified borrowings, such as *wifi*, and with modified borrowings, such as *interfaz < interface*. A search in the CORPES XXI (RAE, 2015) database reveals examples of both *el wifi* (17 occurrences) and *la wifi* (13 occurrences), as well as *el interfaz* (20 occurrences) and *la interfaz* (296 occurrences). In both instances, however, the DLE opts for only one gender: *interfaz* is listed as feminine (DLE, 2014), while *wifi* is masculine (DLE, 2014). The mechanism of semantic analogy appears to tip the scale in each case. With *interfaz*, resorting to compositional analogies gives an ambiguous outcome, since similarly structured Spanish words that contain the free morpheme *faz* can either be masculine (*el antifaz*) or feminine (*la faz, la sobrefaz*), while the semantic association with *la conexión* highlighted in the full definition in the DLE indicates the feminine gender. In the case of *wifi*, compositional analogies are difficult due to the scarcity of Spanish words ending in the unstressed syllable –*fi*, but semantic analogy with *el sistema de conexión* suggests the masculine gender. We will discuss this below in the context of the word 'selfie'.

To better understand the mechanisms underlying gender ambivalence in Spanish Anglicisms, we will now discuss the results of a case study involving two recent and widely used examples, 'tablet' and 'selfie'.

3. A case study of two technological Anglicisms in Spanish: 'Tablet' and 'selfie'

3.1. Camouflaged borrowing: From el/la tablet to la tableta

From a compositional point of view, it is notable that only a few Spanish words are constructed like 'tablet', a disyllabic word with an unstressed ending and a terminal phoneme /t/. Most Spanish words of a similar structure are loans, and some of them have been adapted and appear in the latest edition of the DLE (2014), like *el críquet* from the English word *cricket*, and *el sovét, el sóviet* or *soviet* (in Mexico and Venezuela) from Russian. Other borrowings, such as *el gadget*, despite not being included in the DLE, are currently used without adaptation and can be found in the CORPES XXI database. A quick search in this corpus reveals other similar forms, like 'ticket', which appears with three different spellings: *tíquet* (12 occurrences), *tiquet* (3 occurrences), and *tiket* (2 occurrences) in texts from Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela, always used in the masculine, all the while maintaining the terminal phoneme /t/. For the English borrowing *ticket*, the *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas* (DPD), a dictionary of

the RAE (Real Academia Española) first published in 2005, and later on with the collaboration of ASALE (Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española), with the function of clarifying the usage of terms deemed problematic (2005), recommends using the adaptation *el tique* and mentions the form *el tiquete*, which is used in some Latin American countries. Consequently, these forms have been included in the latest edition of the DLE (2014): *el tique* (Peninsular Spanish and in some Latin American countries) and *el tiquete* (Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama).

In order to see how today's Spanish speakers are using the word 'tablet' in social media, we employed the Twitter Archive and the online social media analytics tool Topsy. We have also searched the Twitter Archive for the first ever tweet sent containing the word 'tablet', and used Topsy to generate graphical comparisons of the frequency of *el/un* and *la/una tablet* in Twitter during a recent 30-day period.[6]

As can be observed in the Twitter screenshots in Figure 1, 'tablet' was first used in Spanish tweets between April and August 2007, appearing in both masculine and feminine forms. However, the recent frequency data from Topsy shown in Figures 2 and 3 provide some evidence that 'tablet' is now predominantly used in the feminine as *la tablet* (20,010 hits) and *una tablet* (13,176 hits), both plotted in blue, although we also find over a thousand combined examples of *el tablet* (414 hits) and *un tablet* (1,833 hits), plotted in orange.

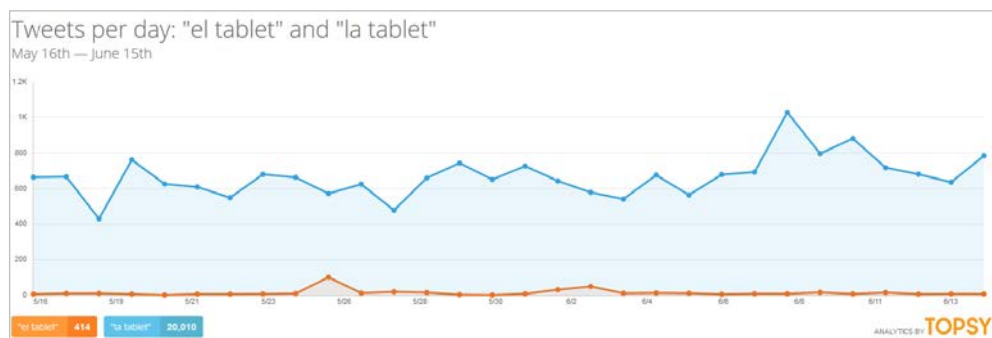**Figure 1.** First Spanish tweets with the borrowing *tablet* (Twitter Archive).

Figure 2. Frequency of *el tablet* vs. frequency of *la tablet* on Twitter, 16 May-15 June 2015 (Topsy).
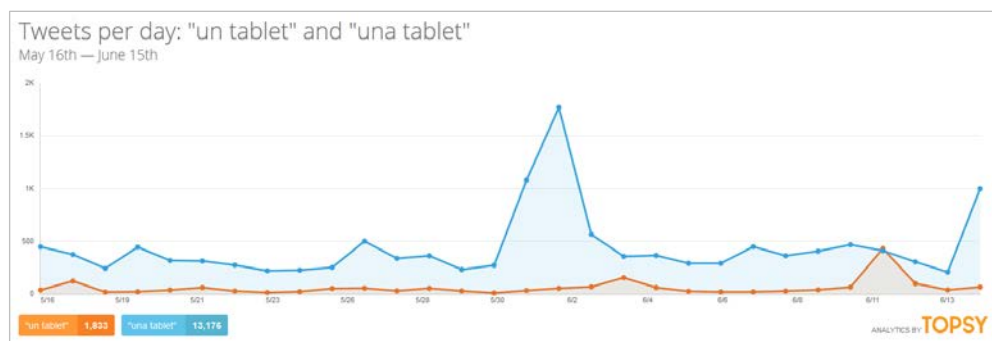

Figure 3. Frequency of *un tablet* vs. frequency of *una tablet* on Twitter, 16 May-15 June 2015 (Topsy).

In the 23rd edition of the DLE (2014), the RAE decided to include the definition *dispositivo electrónico portátil con pantalla táctil y con múltiples prestaciones*, as one of the meanings of the word *tableta*. In doing so, the RAE employed phono-semantic matching –the matching of a foreign word to an already existing word or root in the host language– to implement a strategy Zuckermann (2003) calls 'camouflaged borrowing.'

Camouflaged borrowing is:

> "invisible borrowing [...] in which the lexical item [in the source language] is replaced by semantically, phonetically or phono-semantically related morphemes or lexemes [in the target language]" (Zuckermann, 2003: 37).

In the case of 'tablet', the word evolved from 'tablet' into *tableta,* corresponding to an existing Spanish word, as in *tableta de chocolate* 'chocolate bar.' For Zuckermann (2003), the use of this strategy by language planners is intentional and constitutes 'a shrewd technique' used by purists.

Another proof of the RAE's camouflaged practice lies in the fact that, even as speakers are still debating whether to use *el tablet*, *la tablet* or *la tableta,* the entry for *tableta* in the latest edition of the DLE does not contain any explicit information about it being an adaptation from English, as in the case of most other loanwords. It is worth highlighting that when choosing what to do with the Anglicism 'tablet*',* RAE members also considered the possibility of using the word *tablilla.* As Darío Villanueva explains: *estuvimos viendo la frecuencia en el uso y nos inclinamos por tableta, y si además la gente ya dice tablet es más fácil pasar a tableta que a tablilla* (Cosoy, 2011). On 30 June 2011, the general assembly of the RAE met to decide between *tableta* and *tablilla*, and even though some members were strongly in favour of the latter option, *tableta* prevailed. However, it is interesting that 'tablet' was not considered a viable option, despite Villanueva's acknowledgement that this was the word people were actually using. Thus, the decision to only list *tableta* calls into question Villanueva's statement: *No incluimos nada que no esté avalado por el uso* (Cosoy, 2011).

As shown in the Twitter examples above, it is clear that the word 'tablet' is being used in both genders, even if the feminine form does predominate. Therefore, the RAE's decision to favour the inclusion of *tableta* in the *DLE* without specific reference to its etymology does not fully reflect current usage. It remains to be seen whether speakers end up using *la tableta,* the product of camouflaged borrowing; opt for *la* 'tablet', using the feminine gender induced by camouflaged borrowing (Zuckermann, 2003); or ignore *tableta* altogether and let *el tablet* prevail, along with the masculine gender attributed to many other technology-related Anglicisms. However, as explained by Onysko, Callies and Ogiermann (2013) cited in Franco, Zenner and Speelman (2018: 45):

> "the stronger the association between an Anglicism and a native noun, the more likely it is that the Anglicism will be assigned the gender of the associated native noun. The association between an Anglicism and a native noun is the strongest when the native language has a cognate that resembles the Anglicism in (etymological) form and meaning (for example, *das Notebook* analogous to German *das Buch* 'the book')."

Likewise, it seems plausible that the introduction of the feminine noun *tableta* as an alternative to the Anglicism in Spanish may reinforce the use of *la tablet* by strengthening the association with an existing Spanish word.

3.2. Adapting, adopting or substituting: From el/la selfie to el/la selfi and la autofoto

Another recent example of ambivalence in the use of gender in technology-related words is the term 'selfie'. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this word was first used in Australian English in 2002 (OED, 2015). It became so popular in the

English-speaking world that Oxford Dictionaries designated it Word of the Year in 2013.

Following our social media analysis of 'tablet', we also searched the Twitter Archive and Topsy to look for usage patterns of 'selfie' on Twitter. As shown in Figure 4, 'selfie' was not tweeted with the masculine and feminine definite and indefinite articles all at once, as in the case of 'tablet'. It first appeared with the masculine indefinite article in 2009, and the other forms followed in subsequent years. But, just like with 'tablet', the Topsy results in Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate that 'selfie' is more commonly used on Twitter as a feminine noun, with *la selfie* (30,048 hits) and *una selfie* (69,288 hits), plotted in blue, outnumbering *el selfie* (11,113 hits) and *un selfie* (56,321 hits), plotted in orange. Remarkably, the frequency gap between the masculine and feminine forms of 'selfie' is not as wide as with 'tablet', suggesting that the term 'selfie' remains in an even more unsettled state of transitional gender.

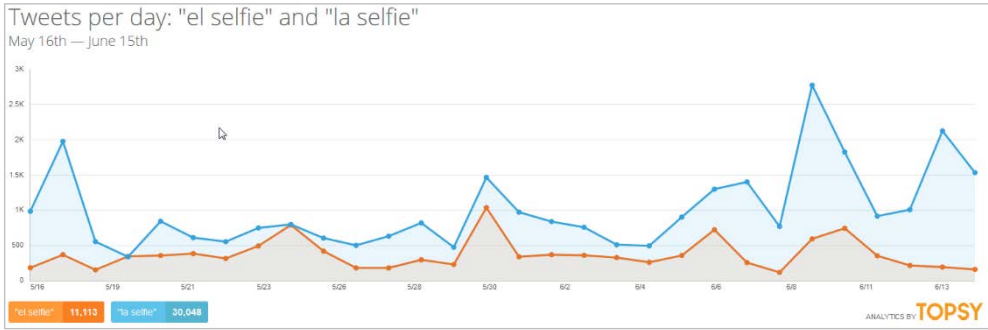**Figure 4.** First Spanish tweets with the borrowing *selfie* (Twitter Archive).

Figure 5. Frequency of *el selfie* vs. frequency of *la selfie* on Twitter, 16 May-15 June 2015 (Topsy).
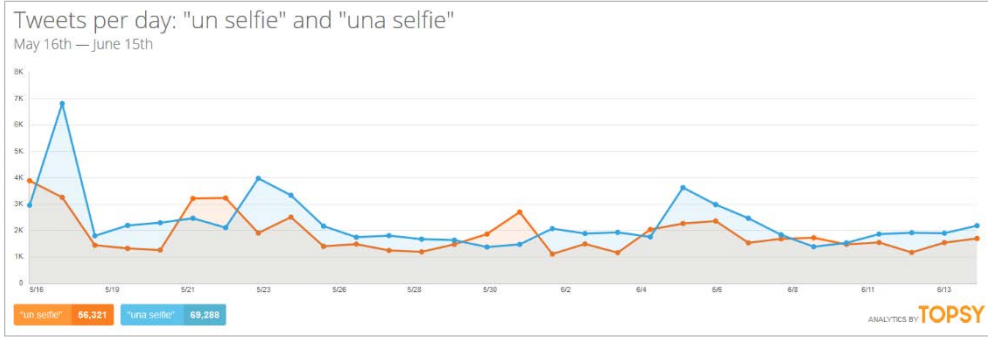

Figure 6. Frequency of *un selfie* vs. frequency of *una selfie* on Twitter, 16 May-15 June 2015 (Topsy).

The fact that the gender assignment of 'selfie' is still in a state of flux is also evident in the Spanish mass media. To illustrate this, we have included in Table 1 some news headlines from six Spanish-speaking countries from recent years. As can be seen in the table, in some cases gender variation exists even within the same publication.

Table 1. Examples of Spanish news headlines with the borrowing *selfie*.

Country	Publication	Date	Headline
Argentina	*La Nación*	28/01/2016	La alarma que te obliga a tomarte **un selfie** para salir de la cama http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1866068-la-alarma-que-te-obliga-a-tomarte-un-selfie-para-salir-de-la-cama
Argentina	*La Nación*	30/06/2016	Quiso sacarse **una selfie** en Machu Picchu, cayó a un precipicio y murió http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1914035-quiso-sacarse-una-selfie-en-machu-picchu-cayo-a-un-precipicio-y-murio
Chile	Publimetro.cl	18/05/2016	Tómense **el selfie** perfecto como las Kardashian sin selfie stick https://www.publimetro.cl/cl/teknik/2016/05/18/tomense-selfie-perfecto-kardashian-selfie-stick.html
Chile	t13.cl	15/02/2017	¿Es esta **la mejor selfie** en la historia del deporte? http://www.t13.cl/noticia/deportes13/es-este-mejor-selfie-historia-del-deporte
Colombia	Colombiadigital.net	28/04/2014	**El *selfie*** más famoso de Colombia https://colombiadigital.net/actualidad/noticias/item/6949-el-selfie-mas-famoso-de-colombia.html
Colombia	*El Heraldo*	20/10/2016	En video: Sofía Vergara y su sobrina dan tips de cómo tomarse **una selfie** https://www.elheraldo.co/tendencias/en-video-sofia-vergara-y-su-sobrina-dan-tips-de-como-tomarse-una-selfie-295583
Mexico	*El Universal*	06/03/2014	Demi Lovato y **los *selfies*** de su nuevo look http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/espectaculos/2014/demi-lovato-selfies-nuevo-look--993061.html
Mexico	*El Universal*	11/04/2015	Lo que **las *selfies*** revelan sobre nosotros http://www.eluniversalmas.com.mx/editoriales/2015/04/75825.php
Peru	*La República*	08/01/2017	México: Hombre muere tras caer a un acantilado cuando trataba de tomarse **un selfie** http://larepublica.pe/mundo/837823-mexico-hombre-muere-tras-caer-un-acantilado-cuando-trataba-de-tomarse-un-selfie
Peru	*La República*	27/06/2017	EE.UU.: Publicó **una selfie** en el baño pero un detalle la llevó a la cárcel http://larepublica.pe/tendencias/889350-estados-unidos-selfie-mujer-carcel
Spain	*El País*	15/08/2014	Cuando **el 'selfie'** no es suficiente https://elpais.com/elpais/2014/08/14/icon/1408006998_560104.html
Spain	*El País*	25/10/2014	Es sólo **una selfie**, cariño https://elpais.com/cultura/2014/11/24/actualidad/1416842625_262330.html

The vowel /i/ may seem at a first glance to be a more common ending in Spanish. However, like in the case of 'tablet', there are not many disyllabic Spanish words in which this terminal phoneme is unstressed. The few examples that occur with this structure are words with no explicit gender, such as the adverb *casi*; the suffixes,

among others, *anti–*, *archi–*, *cuadri–*, *deci–*, *emi–*, *mili–*, *mini–*, *multi–*, *omni–*, *peri–*, *poli–*, *semi–*, and their corresponding allophones; abbreviations such as *boli < bolígrafo*, *mili < militar*, and *pisci < piscina*; and other borrowings, most of them from English, either adapted (e.g., *friki < freaky*, *jipi < hippie/hippy*, *panti < pantyhose*, *punki < punk*) or adopted unchanged (e.g., *bogie* 'a vehicle with four or six wheels').

For this reason, the composition of the word 'selfie' can be seen as atypical in Spanish, both morphologically and phonologically. Moreover, the fact that the suffix is spelled *–ie*, but pronounced /i/, poses an additional problem for the incorporation of the word into Spanish. Dropping the final letter in a word like *selfi < selfie* is nothing new, since other borrowings have undergone the same change, like *el dron < drone*. Nevertheless, adapting the word into Spanish in this way involves a conscious process of educating speakers in using one form over another. As evidenced by the example *bogie*, the adaptation of words that end in the phoneme /i/ is not always consistent. In the words of the Fundéu's director Joaquín Muller: *'La evidencia del uso abrumador del anglicismo 'selfie' nos hizo pensar que, sin renunciar a nuestro consejo anterior para emplear autofoto, sería bueno proponer una adaptación [selfi], que además en este caso no ofrecía problemas desde el punto de vista de la pronunciación ni de la representación gráfica'* (Fundéu, 2013).

Thus, Fundéu has not proposed a specific gender, recognising that it is currently ambiguous. Yet if there are no problems as far as pronunciation is concerned, and the word is pronounced by speakers to resemble the English original, what is the rationale for such a transformation? Given its recommendation, it is evident that the Fundéu prefers the adaptation *selfi* (Fundéu, 2014), in spite of its incongruence with actual use. This recommendation is also inconsistent with similar borrowings such as 'bogie', whose pronunciation never led to its being spelled *bogi, although according to Rodríguez González (2017) *bogui* and *bugui* are alternatives that have sometimes been used.

The other recommendation to which Muller makes reference is that of using the compound *autofoto* (Fundéu, 2013) as a substitute for 'selfie'. *Autofoto* is a newly coined term composed of two elements already present in the Spanish language: the prefix *auto–* 'self' and the abbreviation *foto* (*fotografía* 'photograph'). This alternative to *selfie* is akin both in form and meaning to the word *autorretrato* 'self-portrait.' It is somewhat surprising that despite its own recommendations, and perhaps influenced by the decision made by Oxford Dictionaries the year before, the Fundéu selected *selfi* as the Spanish Word of the Year in 2014 (Fondéu, 2014b). Commenting on this decision, an article in *El País* asked rhetorically, *¿Cómo ha conseguido selfi (sin e) ser la palabra del año en español?* (Marcos & González, 2014). In the same article, the deputy director of the Fundéu, Javier Lascuráin, was asked the question *¿Nos arrepentimos entonces de haber propuesto la alternativa autofoto y por eso apostamos ahora por la adaptación selfi?*. He answered: *No, se podrán seguir usando ambas opciones porque a partir de ahora quedan registradas* (Marcos & González, 2014). This decision by the Fundéu to promote *selfi* as the Word of the

Year is both paradoxical and revealing. On the one hand, it acknowledges the importance of borrowings in Spanish. On the other hand, it underscores the Fundéu's recommendation to adapt the loanword into Spanish as *selfi*, perhaps an indication of a publicity stunt meant to consolidate the usage of the simplified spelling.

Unlike *tableta*, the words 'selfie', *selfi* and *autofoto* were not included in the 23ʳᵈ edition of the DLE (2014). The masculine version, *el/un selfie,* is attested in written and spoken language, but so is the feminine form *la/una selfie*. This is perhaps due to an implicit association with *una fotografía*, but also with the term proposed by the Fundéu: *la/una autofoto*. It is still unclear if this term could have induced and favoured the analogy and prompted the use of the word as a feminine noun. What is yet to be determined is which of the three alternatives –'selfie', *selfi* or *autofoto*– speakers will employ, and whether the recommendations of language institutions will have an influence on this choice.

A look at our Twitter analytics tools suggests that *autofoto* has been used by some speakers in the Spanish Twittersphere, but the numbers shown in the graphs (Figures 7 and 8) are much lower than those for both masculine and feminine 'selfie' (115 hits for *la autofoto* and 356 hits for una *autofoto*). This is a strong indication that although it is used with some frequency, *autofoto* has not permeated the language of Spanish-speaking Twitter users in the same way that 'selfie' has in the past few years. It is also evident that there is no gender ambivalence in the use of *autofoto*, as the *–foto* root clearly marks this word as feminine for Spanish speakers.
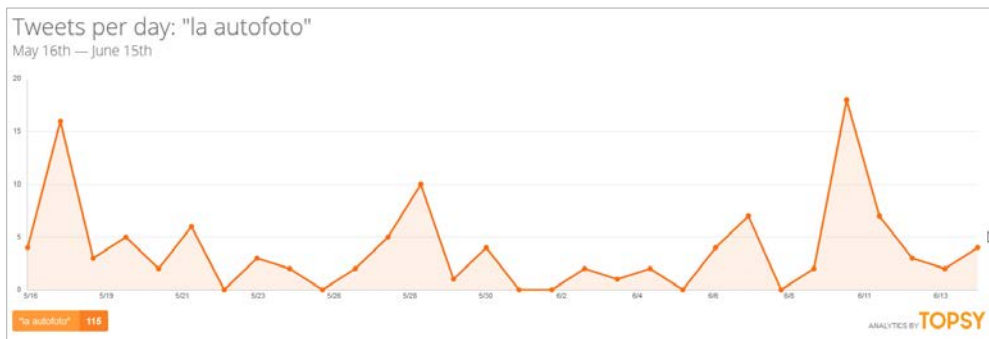

Figure 7. Frequency of *la autofoto* on Twitter, 16 May-15 June 2015 (Topsy).
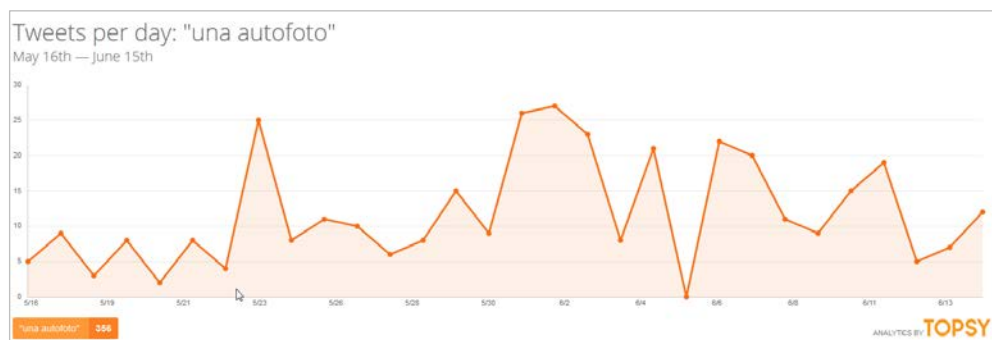
Figure 8. Frequency of *una autofoto* on Twitter, 16 May-15 June 2015 (Topsy).

4. Current attitudes towards Anglicisms and linguistic policy

We have shown above that widely used technological neologisms such as 'Internet 'and *wifi* demonstrate the simultaneous use of the masculine and feminine forms in Spanish. Likewise, we have seen gender ambivalence in the use of the words 'tablet' and 'selfie'. We have also analysed this ambivalence by describing the formal characteristics of these words and explaining the linguistic policy applied to them by language institutions. Clearly, it is difficult to predict which gender will predominate for either 'tablet' or 'selfie', or if both will continue to coexist. The question remains how, given the practical role of language institutions, might linguistic policy influence or determine not only the gender of these loanwords but also their use in the future. In short, what can the treatment of these two recent lexical borrowings from English tell us about the attitudes of language institutions towards foreignisms.

Poplack et al. (1982) are right to claim that evidence from loanwords is a valuable tool for evaluating gender assignment. Morin (2010: 166) likewise points out that:

> "it is necessary to [...] distinguish between orthographic, phonological, and morphological considerations. When this is done, it becomes clear that there are certain tendencies, but that noun ending, however it is defined, is not by itself a reliable indicator of gender assignment. This is especially important in the case of loanwords."

As we have explained, in languages like Spanish that are marked with explicit gender distinctions, gender assignment is one of the immediate effects of cross-linguistic lexical influence (Muñoz-Basols & Salazar, 2016). However, as we have seen in the characteristics of the words 'tablet' and 'selfie', in the case of loanwords in Spanish it is also necessary to look at the broader sociolinguistic picture, analysing gender assignment in conjunction with any adaptations of the words in question. Such an approach makes it possible to examine the role of linguistic policy and some of the attitudes towards the use of Anglicisms in Spanish.

In view of the active role played by Spanish language institutions, which act as "guardians of the Spanish language" (Mar-Molinero 2008: 30), and normative dictionaries, it is expected that there will be a variety of reactions and attitudes with respect to how the increasing number of Anglicisms referring to technological devices will be incorporated into Spanish. In this sense, we can cite the words of Academy member José María Merino, who points out that: *La invasión de las nuevas tecnologías es estupenda, pero a lo mejor están restringiendo el código lingüístico. La gente se expresa cada vez peor tras pasar al lenguaje taquigráfico* (Varela, 2014). By describing the presence of new technology-related words as an 'invasion,' and comparing their effect on language use as *lenguaje taquigráfico* or 'shorthand writing,' Merino's words attest not just to the rapid integration of neologisms into the language, but also to the fact that this phenomenon is allowing speakers to express themselves more succinctly.

In spite of the resistant attitude towards foreignisms of this kind by some speakers and academics, it is altogether logical for people to try to communicate more concisely (Gerding et al., 2012), given that natural languages are influenced by the economy principle of "[being] quick and easy" (Leech, 1983: 67). Economy of expression as a principle of linguistic change has an undeniable impact on syntax (Moessner, 1997), and, more importantly for our study, on minimal parts of speech such as morphemes and lexical units. The economy principle is best evidenced in Spanish by processes of word formation such as abbreviation and clipping (e.g., *la foto > la fotografía*, *moto > motocicleta*, *la uni > la Universidad*, *el finde > el fin de semana*) and the formation of hypocorisms or nicknames (e.g., *Manu > Manuel*, *Tere > Teresa*).

Gottlieb (2006) enumerates a series of standard arguments for and against linguistic borrowing. Those in favour of borrowing believe that it facilitates learning of the donor language, shortens the distance between languages and cultures, provides expressive enrichment, makes translation simpler, and fights chauvinism and provincialism. In contrast, those who oppose borrowing argue that it impedes the reading of national classics, increases distance between generations and social groups, leads to linguistic impoverishment, kills the fascination with foreign languages and cultures, and paves the way for the dominance of a foreign culture.

The arguments opposing linguistic borrowing have probably conditioned the way in which language institutions have acted in the case of the words 'tablet' and 'selfie'. It may be supposed that a sociolinguistic component partly explains the circumstances surrounding the adoption and/or adaptation of these words, in addition to their formal characteristics. Drawing attention to linguistic policies towards loanwords serves to highlight the influence official recommendations can exert on usage and their role as a determining factor in the attribution of gender to borrowings. The very usage of *tableta* in the mass media in accordance with recommendations of language institutions may well be influencing not only the speakers' adoption of this word, but also their choice of gender. Even those who continue to use 'tablet', ignoring the

RAE's proposal to use the feminine Spanish word *tableta*, may be unconsciously prompted by the dictionary to use *la/una tablet* rather than *el/un tablet*, even though the word may have originally entered the language as a masculine noun, as most Anglicisms tend to do. In fact, the *Gran diccionario de anglicismos* (Rodríguez González, 2017) includes the abbreviation 'n.' to indicate that a noun is being used as both masculine and feminine, and the accompanying examples demonstrate this. Similarly, the Fundéu's endorsement of *autofoto* in the media may remind Spanish speakers of the association with *la fotografía,* and thus lead them to prefer the feminine *la/una selfie* to the masculine *el/un selfie*. In this case, the *Gran diccionario de anglicismos* (Rodríguez González, 2017) mentions that 'selfie' is currently generally used as a masculine noun.

What all this reveals is the existence of different measures and criteria in deciding how foreignisms, especially those from English, are treated in Spanish. There appears to be widespread inconsistency in the making of recommendations on language usage, as observed in the varying treatment loanwords have historically been given by Spanish language institutions. Foreignisms usually enter the language unmodified and may officially be adopted as such. Alternatively, they can be used in italics in written discourse to differentiate them from other words or adapted to Spanish orthographic conventions.

The RAE attributes such adaptations to evidence from actual language use and pronunciation, although this is difficult to verify considering all the dialectal variations of Spanish, language contact (Spanish in the US, Puerto Rico or Mexico vs. Spain) (for US Spanish, see Moreno-Fernández 2016), and the absence of a reliable corpus of current use. In the latest edition of the DLE (2014), we still find Anglicisms whose adaptations continue to surprise speakers, such as the newly introduced terms *bluyín* < 'blue jean' and *bugui-bugui* <*boogie woogie*, as well as the earlier entries *güisqui* < *whisky* and *toples* < *topless*. Some words like 'hippie', *hippy* and *jipi* are recorded with both the adopted and the adapted forms, while other words such as 'blues', 'boom', 'clown', 'free lance', 'hall', 'jet lag', 'light' and 'reggae', are left untouched despite their foreign spelling and pronunciation. These adoptions and adaptations by the RAE and other Spanish language institutions have met with varying success, with some of them becoming part of every Spanish speaker's vocabulary, and others falling into oblivion.

The lack of consistency in the RAE's lexicographical decision-making is best demonstrated by the camouflaged borrowing technique behind *tableta* described above, i.e., the lack of reference to the word's English etymology in the DLE's latest edition. This example raises the question whether the main criteria for choosing between adopting and adapting Anglicisms should be revisited, especially in the case of technology-related words.

A strong motivation for change is the Spanish-speaking world's continuous contact with English (Niño-Murcia, Godenzzi & Rothman, 2008). Significantly, the United

States is now second only to Mexico in terms of the number of native Spanish speakers, even surpassing Spain (Moreno-Fernández & Otero, 2008; Muñoz-Basols, Rodríguez Lifante & Cruz Moya, 2017, for a quantitative perspective on the status of Spanish as an international language; also see Dumitrescu (2013); Muñoz-Basols, Muñoz-Calvo & Suárez García (2014) for recent data on the presence of Spanish in the US). A revision of the policy on foreignisms may thus be necessary in view of the exposure most Spanish speakers have to other cultures and languages and the fact that lexical borrowing is a process that occurs naturally in language-contact situations (Wierzbicka, 2006). As Moreno-Fernández (2016: 17) argues in the context of Spanish in the US:

> "no tiene sentido plantear una norma del español que prescinda del anglicismo o cuyo objetivo sea la erradicación de toda sombra del inglés. Quien así lo proponga ni conoce bien cómo funciona la sociolingüística del español en los Estados Unidos, ni conoce cómo funciona la sociolingüística del español en ninguno de los territorios bilingües en que se utiliza; y son muchos".

Ongoing research on language contact between Spanish and English, such as the analysis of the use of Anglicisms in US Spanish on Twitter (Moreno Sandoval & Moreno-Fernández, 2017; Moreno-Fernández & Moreno Sandoval, 2018), will help elucidate how the reciprocal influence between the two languages is shaping speakers' repertoires. However, more research on the interaction between English and Spanish in other Spanish-speaking countries is needed. Such research should inform the current debate on language policy in the Spanish-speaking world. The recommendations of the RAE, ASALE, and other language institutions such as Fundéu, have a direct impact on language use in formal contexts, not only through the publication of the most authoritative Spanish dictionary, the DLE, but also because of the influence they exert on the mass media, especially in Spain. For instance, Fundéu makes regular recommendations on language use and also publishes the *Manual de español urgente* (Fundéu, 2015), which is used by Spanish newspapers, and which suggests numerous alternatives to the use of Anglicisms. While many of the general recommendations on language use are useful, those pertaining to Anglicisms are elaborated from the point of view of English lexical borrowings being a practice to be avoided at all costs, without considering how extended the use of English words by speakers of Spanish is in practice. The Fundéu's proposed spelling of 'selfi' explained above (Fundéu, 2014a; Rodríguez González, 2017) was thus incorporated into the title of a TV programme *Hazte un selfi* (LaguíaTV, 2016), aired by the Spanish television channel Cuatro. Likewise the RAE has been actively fighting against the use of English, for instance, in the realm of advertising, as evidenced in the headline, *La RAE declara la guerra a los anglicismos con un divertido 'spot'* (Elies, 2016). To this end, the RAE commissioned two videos in an attempt to mock of the use of English borrowings by publicists in the launch of consumer products advocating that in many

cases publicists seem to be unaware of the real meaning of English words that accompany the products. Consequently, the two products featured in the videos were a perfume called 'swine', an unappealing name for obvious reasons, and a pair of sunglasses with a supposed 'blind effect', which did not allow the user to see anything (see Elies, 2016).

Finally, the following example demonstrates how Spanish language institutions actively support initiatives to counteract the impact of English. The tweet below (Figure 9) celebrated the presentation of the *Primer glosario de comunicación estratégica en español* (Echazú & Rodríguez, 2018), a document hosted on the Fundéu website and developed with the advice of the RAE. The open-access glossary recommends alternatives to Anglicisms in the fields of marketing and advertising. Not surprisingly, it proposes using *tableta*, instead of 'tablet,' and *autofoto*, instead of 'selfie.'[7]

Figure 9. Presentation at the Fundéu of the *Primer glosario de comunicación estratégica en español*.

However, initiatives like this raise several important questions. Namely, are all the Anglicisms contained in this glossary superfluous or unnecessary? Do some of them,

on the contrary, fill vocabulary gaps in the language? Have these words been properly verified in a corpus to gauge their current use? And, are the proposed alternatives in Spanish likely to be used, and consequently prosper, in the language? Some of the examples proposed as alternatives to English are: *itinerancia* (roaming), *plantar ideas* (seeding), *mecadotécnia callejera* (street marketing), *marca paraguas* (umbrella brand), *encubrimiento* (cloacking), *migas de pan* (breadcrumbs), *pago sin contacto* (contactless payment), *suplantador* (phishing). Many of these lexical items may not prosper in Spanish because of their polysemic nature and lack of semantic specificity. Likewise, the glossary does not mention the gender of the nouns presented. This is particularly important in those instances that are clear adaptations from English and whose gender may change from the unmarked masculine gender, depending on the semantic association among other factors, e.g., *yingle* (jingle), *estand* (stand), *trávelin* (travelling), *castin* (casting) *plácet* (placet), *fotocol* (photocall).

Without diminishing the effort of this glossary, it is relevant to question how authoritative this lexical selection might be, as it is not clear how it relates to actual language use. More importantly, any recommendations on language use should be sensitive about how the Spanish language is used in the areas where it is spoken. In fact, while establishing a common Pan-Hispanic policy on the use of Anglicisms might prove a complex matter because of the historical and/or current contact with the English language, there is no doubt that a more sensitive approach towards the different realities of the Spanish-speaking world is needed.

What emerges here is that the current policy on Anglicisms in Spanish is clearly outdated. Likewise, developing an antagonistic discourse towards English lexical borrowings does not help connect the work carried out by language institutions to the actions of speakers. On the contrary, all these efforts to defend Spanish against the 'inclemency' of the English language contribute to amplify the gap between language policy and language use.

Language specialists can help us understand how English is contributing to shape our language, as has happened across the centuries, but it is ultimately language use that determines the adoption and integration of foreign words that results from language contact (see the recent *Diccionario de anglicismos del español estadounidense* by Moreno-Fernández, 2018). As Fernando Lázaro Carreter once said:

> "el inglés es el vehículo de la más alta civilización mundial y no podemos negarlo. Nuestra vida está ordenada por los módulos ingleses: desayunamos cereales con leche descremada, salimos a una calle señalizada con códigos americanos, nos vestimos según su moda. Ellos no invaden, se les llama" (Rodríguez González, 2017: vii).

CONCLUSION

Tracing the history of English borrowings in Spanish serves to illustrate the many factors that can condition the adoption or adaptation of loanwords. As this study has demonstrated, such borrowings are currently especially evident in the semantic domain of technology. Because of the immediacy of their integration into a language, technology-related words provide a fertile ground for investigating some of the direct effects of cross-linguistic lexical influence on linguistic systems beyond lexis. In the case of Spanish, the gender assignment system is inevitably linked to lexical borrowing, since it is in discourse that speakers are called upon to reference extralinguistic realities and thus establish agreement, which, in some cases, may lead to ambiguity in the assignment of gender to newly borrowed foreign words.

As we have also discussed, in languages like Spanish where language institutions play an active role, the recommendations made by such institutions are not only formulated but also disseminated in the media and in prestige dictionaries. They therefore exert a strong influence on various aspects of language usage, including the use of foreignisms, while seeking "the promotion of Pan-Hispanic unity" (del Valle, 2008: 23). However, we have seen that current linguistic policy is often inconsistent, and the decision-making behind these policies is not always clear-cut.

What is clear is that the assignment of gender to words of foreign origin is far from a purely linguistic process that can only be analysed on the basis of phonology and morphology. Indeed, the semantic association displayed by the speaker using an Anglicism (Rodríguez Segura, 1999), is always a key factor that must be taken into consideration in order to understand the possible motivations for assigning a specific gender to a word.

Finally, through our case study of 'tablet' and 'selfie', we have shown that language institutions and their attitudes towards foreignisms can play a role in determining gender, and therefore constitute an additional sociolinguistic factor to consider when looking at how loanwords are incorporated into a host language. We hope to have established the need for further studies on gender that examine the broader picture of sociolinguistic policy, as well as proven that studying specific and representative lexical items can serve to spur the debate on the role of linguistic policies regarding foreignisms, most notably Anglicisms, in the 21st century.

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NOTES

[2] As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2015), a 'tablet' is 'a small portable computer in the form of a flat tablet, esp. one comprising a touchscreen display, operated via a stylus or fingertip rather than a keyboard or mouse,' while a 'selfie' is 'a photographic self-portrait; especially one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media.'

[3] The present role of technology as 'a catalyst for emerging words' (Oxford Dictionaries Blog, 2013), and the speed with which the vocabulary of new technologies is being absorbed into different languages, makes this particular semantic field an ideal testing ground for investigating the process of adoption and/or adaptation of loanwords into a receiving language, along with its possible effects on other linguistic systems beyond the lexicon. One such system is the assignment of gender to borrowed nouns, which Poplack et al. (1982: 2) describes as "one means available to speakers to incorporate foreign material into a host language."

[4] Many English words ending in –*ty* adopt the suffix –*dad* in Spanish, which is always feminine, as in 'sincerity' (*la sinceridad*), 'spontaneity*'* (*la espontaneidad*), 'university' (*la universidad*).

[5] The nominal suffix –*eo* is always masculine and denotes an action or an activity, as in 'marketing*'* (*el mercadeo*), 'monitoring*'* (*el monitoreo*), 'surfing' (*el surfeo*).

[6] The Topsy tool for analysing social network data closed shortly after we gathered the data covering the period from 16 May to 15 June 2015. Nevertheless, its functionality was useful for comparing the use of language among internet users.

[7] This approach contrasts with that of the German counterpart of the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (DLE), the *Duden Dictionary*, for example, which has incorporated words such as selfie and tablet because of their presence in the everyday use of the language. As Kathrin Kunkel Razum confirms, "Es un hecho que muchas palabras del mundo anglosajón aparecen en nuestras vidas al considerar el desarrollo tecnológico" (EcoDiario.es 2017).

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