

Trump tuiteó su malestar: English Argument Structure Borrowing in Spanish

Trump tuiteó su malestar: Préstamo de la estructura argumental inglesa en español

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This paper investigates argument structure borrowing as regards the verb *tuitear* from the model of the English verb *tweet*. In order to test this borrowing hypothesis, two research questions are posed: 1) To what extent does the Spanish verb mirror the argument structure of the English verb?; and 2) Is the argument structure of *tuitear* dissimilar to other semantically related Spanish verbs? This study is based on empirical evidence from Davies's *News on the Web (NOW)* English and Spanish corpora. The analysis of two samples of 1,000 constructions of *tweet* and *tuitear* reveals a striking similarity in structural behavior. The contrast with other Spanish instrument-of-communication verbs (e.g. *telefonar*, *telegrafiar*, *faxear*, *radiar*, *televisar*, *cartear* and *cablegrafiar*) shows that the behavior of *tuitear* is unique in this class.

Keywords: *tweet*, *tuitear*, *borrowing*, *argument structure*, *instrument of communication verbs*

Este artículo investiga el préstamo de la estructura argumental del verbo *tuitear* a partir del modelo del verbo inglés *tweet*. Para probar la hipótesis de préstamo se plantean dos preguntas de investigación: 1) ¿Hasta qué punto copia el verbo español la estructura argumental del verbo inglés? y 2) ¿Es la estructura argumental de *tuitear* diferente a la de otros verbos españoles relacionados semánticamente? El estudio se apoya en material empírico de los corpus *News on the Web (NOW)* en inglés y en español. El análisis de dos muestras de 1000 construcciones de *tweet* y *tuitear* muestra una sorprendente semejanza en su comportamiento estructural. El contraste con otros verbos de instrumento de comunicación españoles (*telefonar*, *telegrafiar*, *faxear*, *radiar*, *televisar*, *cartear* y *cablegrafiar*) revela que el comportamiento de *tuitear* es excepcional entre los miembros de esta clase.

Palabras clave: *tweet*, *tuitear*, *préstamo*, *estructura argumental*, *verbos de instrumento de comunicación*

1. INTRODUCTION

Levin (1993) classifies English verbs according to shared semantic components and diathesis alternations. Speakers know which alternations are allowed with each verb and perceive subtle differences in argument structure even in novel verbs. For example, the development of electronic communication not only gave rise to the use of *modem* as a noun, but also as a verb, namely to 'communicate via modem', as in "*I'll modem him tomorrow*" (Levin, 1993: 3). This

new verb assimilates the semantic and structural properties of instrument of communication (hereinafter IC) verbs and falls into this class: *cable, e-mail, fax, modem, netmail, phone, radio, relay, satellite, semaphore, sign, signal, telephone, telecast, telegraph, telex, wire* and *wireless*.

Levin's 'preliminary investigation', which is prior to the corpus-era, does not include information about the productivity or acceptability of each verb in its different diatheses. Indeed, Baker and Ruppenhofer (2002) note that some of Levin's alternations for the class of IC verbs were not attested in the *British National Corpus* (hereinafter *BNC*); for example, *telephone* was not found in the argument structures in (1). They conclude that "the strategy of grouping by a verb's unique set of alternations leads to overly narrow classes" (2002: 32), especially with verbs of communication.

- (1) a. ?Mom telephoned me the good news.
- b. ?Mom telephoned me that she was ill.
- c. ??My brother, mom had telephoned me, was now in the hospital. (2002: 30)

Similar conclusions have been arrived at by De Clerck, Verroens, Willems and Coleman (2011), who contrast the argument structures of *skype* and *blackberry* with the structural patterns of more traditional verbs (*telephone, fax, telegraph*): "Some of the constructions mentioned in Levin (1993) actually occur fairly infrequently, while others seem to be more typical of certain individual representatives" (2011: 66).¹ Their web-based material reveals both a different syntactic distribution among IC verbs and patterns not mentioned in Levin (1993) or marked therein as ungrammatical. Novel verbs exhibit a structural behavior very similar to the more traditional IC verbs, except for an increasing use of the intransitive reciprocal pattern (e.g. *I skyped with James last night*).

The selection of argument structure constructions of novel IC verbs has also been investigated in other languages. Barðdal (2003) examines the structural behavior of *email* and *sms* in Icelandic. She reports that although they are semantically related to verbs of sending, they occur in the caused-motion construction, which is not allowed in Icelandic for sending events. More precisely, she notes that *faxa* and *emaila* originally only appeared in the transfer construction, their use being subsequently extended to the caused-motion construction, before concluding that "the more a verb has spread to different age groups and different social/professional groups across the population the more constructions it is accepted in" (2003: 34).

The syntactic behavior of novel IC verbs has also been researched in a contrastive perspective. Verroens, De Clerck and Willems (2010) explain the interlinguistic differences between French and English in terms of language specific verbal typology, while intralinguistic differences are claimed to occur when other verbal expressions are available, or when nouns do not easily undergo certain word-formation processes.

The structural possibilities of novel Spanish IC verbs have not been examined, as far as I can gather, except by Martínez Vázquez (2021). Most electronic IC verbs (e.g. *wasapear, bloguear, googlear, facebookear, instagramear, youtubuear, emailear* and *skypear*) have still not been accepted by the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (Real Academia de la Lengua Española, hereinafter RAE); only *tuitear* has been included in the RAE's dictionary (*DRAE*). After being used for some years with spelling variations (e.g. *twittear, twitear* and *tweetear*), it was incorporated in 2014 in its present, more Spanish form. Yet, in spite of the

¹ Martínez Vázquez (2021) also reports an uneven occurrence of Spanish IC verbs in the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual*, with 675 tokens for *telefonar*, but only nine examples of *telegrafiar*, eight of *cartearse* and one of *faxear*, all of which are conventional verbs that have been accepted by the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language and now appear in its dictionary.

RAE's staunch defense of native formations, some atypical constructions for a Romance language have made their way into Spanish with this verb:

- (2) Albert Rivera ha tuiteado su apoyo a la candidata. (17/12/12, *El Periódico*)
 'Albert Rivera has tweeted his support to the candidate'

This sentence illustrates what Levin and Rapoport (1988) describe as "lexical subordination", whereby a manner or instrument verb is subordinated under a result clause at the level of lexical-conceptual structure (See Figure 1).

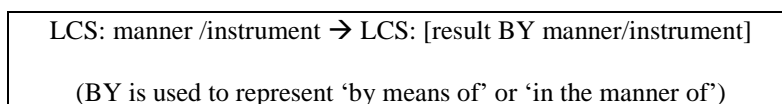


Figure 1: *Lexical subordination (Levin & Rapoport, 1988: 282)*

Lexical subordination involves an extension of meaning with the incorporation of different resulting clauses (3). This process is open to novel verbs.

- (3) a. go: The bottle floated into the cave.
 b. create: Frances kicked a hole in the fence.
 c. remove: The company processed the vitamins out of the food.
 d. cause-state: Evelyn wiped the dishes dry.
 e. cause-location: Philip waltzed Sally across the room.
 f. express: Pauline smiled her thanks. (Levin & Rapoport, 1988: 283)

As Levin and Rapoport (1988) note, French lacks these extended meanings and uses paraphrases in which verbs keep their simple meaning instead. Conflated constructions like those in (3) are prototypical in the Germanic languages, but infrequent in Romance languages, which do not lexicalize result with manner or cause in a single construction the way English and other satellite-framed languages do. Instead, Spanish, as a verb-framed language expresses result in the verb, while manner, if relevant, is coded in a gerundive or prepositional phrase with a foregrounded effect, e.g. *La botella entró en la cueva (flotando)* (Talmy, 1985: 123; 2000: 226, 229). However, *tuitear* in (2), like Levin and Rapoport's 'gesture-expression construction' in (3f), packs the instrumental and resulting events into one pattern, instead of maintaining means (IC) and result (expression) separately, as is prototypical in a verb-framed typology (Faber & Sánchez, 1990; Martínez Vázquez, 2005, 2015; Caballero & Paradis, 2018):

- (4) Albert Rivera ha expresado su apoyo a la candidata (por Twitter).
 'Albert Rivera has expressed his support to the candidate (by Twitter)'

Novel formations like (2) might evince an ongoing process of structural borrowing from English, which is not surprising given the fact that most of the novel electronic IC verbs are lexical borrowings from English, and grammatical borrowing has been reported to have a lexical basis: "The addition of foreign lexical items to a language's inventory, i.e., lexical borrowing, may have grammatical repercussions which can be traced directly to lexical influence" (King, 2000: 175). Besides, the dominant position of English worldwide, especially on the Internet, favors language contact situations, thus leading to potential borrowing processes (Crystal, 2001; Edwards, 2012: 85; De Mooij, 2014: 47; Schmidt & Diemer, 2015: 11; among many others).

The impact of English on the lexical level in different types of language contact situations has been widely studied (e.g. Görlach, 2001; Pulcini, Furiassi & Rodríguez González, 2012). Some research has focused on grammatical replication (e.g. Pountain, 1994; Heine & Kuteva, 2005), but far too little attention has been paid to contact-induced changes at the level of argument structure (Trips & Stein, 2019). To fill this gap, this paper examines constructional borrowing in a ‘foreign language contact’ situation where English, as a global lingua franca, is the source language (Peterson & Fägersten, 2018). Since verbs of communication have been reported to show independent behavior (Baker & Ruppenhofer, 2002; De Clerck et al., 2011), the focus is placed here on a single verb. The hypothesis that will be tested in this study is whether or not the structural alternations available for the novel Spanish verb *tuitear* (to tweet) have been borrowed from English. The evidence to test this hypothesis comes from two samples of 1,000 constructions of the verb in each language randomly extracted from the *News on the Web* (hereinafter *NOW*) corpora. A comparison of the argument structures found with both verbs will first help to determine if there is structural resemblance. The constructional behavior of *tuitear* will then be contrasted with that of semantically related Spanish verbs, to ascertain whether or not it evinces English replication or analogy with other Spanish verbs. The study is restricted to European Spanish² to avoid intralinguistic interference with other varieties of Spanish (US Spanish and Latin American Spanish), which experience different degrees of English influence.³ I chose American English for the comparison because *NOW* contains a higher frequency of the verb *tweet* in this variety (24,91 per million words) than in British English (10,69 per million words).

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: after offering a brief overview of communicative events and their argument constructions (Section 2), the data and the methodology employed in this study are then described (Section 3). Section 4 presents the results of the data analyses and Section 5 offers a discussion of the main findings, before ending with a summary of the conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

According to Levin (1993: 207), IC verbs differ from other verbs of communication in that they allow for dative alternation, which assimilates them to verbs of change of possession or “acquisition of information”:

- (5) a. Heather cabled the news to Sara.
b. Heather cabled Sara the news. (Levin, 1993: 207)

Goldberg (1995: 127–128) also interprets communication as transfer, i.e. “traveling across from the stimulus to the listener” (1995: 148), as in:

- (6) She wired Jo a message. (Goldberg, 1995: 148)

² I use the term “European Spanish” instead of “peninsular Spanish” because the latter does not include the Spanish islands nor the Spanish cities in mainland Africa (Ceuta and Melilla).

³ Patzelt (2011) shows that the impact of English is greater on American Spanish than European Spanish. Her analysis of three corpora of Spanish-language newspapers conveyed the following results: 5.2% of anglicisms in US newspapers, 2.6% in Latin American newspapers, and 1.6% in European newspapers.

In Spanish, communication is also described in terms of transfer. Gutiérrez Ordóñez (1999: 1876) distinguishes four classes of verbs of transfer (material transfer, communicative transfer, physical motion and abstract motion), although he does not mention any IC verb. Vázquez, Fernández and Martí's, (2000) wider list of communicative transfer verbs includes three: *telefonar*, *telegrafiar* and *televisar*.

Communication understood as transfer involves three participants: an entity belonging to the category 'information', which moves from a 'speaker' to a 'receiver' (Jackendoff, 1990: 266). The subject of communicative events is inherently human, although inanimate subjects may also occur metonymically (Cano Aguilar, 1987: 207; Downing, 2015: 182), as in the following example with *tweet*:

- (7) The National Weather Service tweeted wind gusts of 18 and 23 mph were recorded at observation sites. (19/04/27, CBS News)

The message is inherent to communicative events, but it may not surface in the syntax with some verbs. From the nine classes of verbs of communication listed in Levin (1993), verbs of manner of speaking, *talk* verbs, *chitchat* verbs and *complain* verbs allow for the intransitive construction (e.g. *Susan whispered/talked*, *Ellen was chitchatting/complaining*), while the other five, including IC verbs, require complementation.

The simplest form of reporting other people's messages is to reproduce the exact words uttered (direct speech). Reporting clauses may appear in initial, medial or final position, like adverbials. As Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985: 1023) explain, it is difficult to draw the line between a direct object and an adverbial classification of direct speech. They also observe a resemblance between reporting clauses and comment clauses, (8). As a matter of fact, they suggest that reporting clauses are a type of comment clause, although they do not mention IC verbs (1985: 1115, no. a).

- (8) a. 'Generals,' they alleged, 'never retire; they merely fade away'. (reporting clause)
b. Generals, it is alleged, never retire; they merely fade away. (comment clause)
(Quirk et al., 1985: 1023)

Suñer (2000: 569) does not mention any IC verbs in her classes of verbs introducing direct quotes in Spanish (verbs of saying, manner of speaking and thinking). Nor are they mentioned in Maldonado González (1999). For Levin (1993), however, English IC verbs allow for both direct speech (9a) and parenthetical use (9b). The message may also appear syntactically linked to the verb with different clausal objects (10).

- (9) a. Heather cabled (Sara/to Sara), "Come immediately."
b. The winner, Heather cabled (Sara/to Sara), would be announced tonight.
(10) a. Heather cabled (Sara/to Sara) that the party would be tonight.
b. Heather cabled (Sara/to Sara) when to send the package.
c. Heather cabled (Sara/to Sara) to come.
d. Heather cabled for Sara to come. (Levin, 1993: 207)

Alternatively, the object may be a noun phrase summarizing the content of a speech act (Dirven, Goossens, Putseys & Vorlat, 1982: 3; Vorlat, 1982: 27; Cano Aguilar, 1987: 207; Martínez Vázquez, 2005); typically, a metalinguistic word (e.g. *message*, *story*, *news*, *facts*) as in (11). Dirven et al. (1982: 2) term it "synthesis", Vorlat (1982: 27) defines it as a "recitable entity" and in Martínez Vázquez (2005) it is considered to be a "pro-dictum", to wit, a form which stands for the reported speech act.

(11) Heather cabled the news. (Levin, 1993: 206)

Information can also be more indirectly reported; not as a summary of the message, but as a *topic*, “the theme or the subject of a certain unit of linguistic action”, introduced by *on*, *about* or *of* (Dirven et al., 1982: 3). Levin (1993) only acknowledges the use of *about* with IC verbs:

(12) Heather cabled Sara about the situation. (Levin, 1993: 207)

Other verbs of communication (verbs of manner of speaking, verbs of animal sound and some verbs of nonverbal expression) may also be used to denote the means of expressing a message. These verbs, unlike IC verbs, may take another type of abbreviated message: the “reaction” object (Levin, 1993: 98; Martínez Vázquez, 2014; Bouso, 2017, 2020), which denotes emotions, moods or illocutionary acts. Levin (1993: 98) describes it as a “non-subcategorized” object (e.g. *approval*, *disapproval*, *assent*, *admiration*, *disgust*, *yes*, *no*) denoting “a reaction (an emotion or disposition)” which extends the meaning of the verb to “express (a reaction) by V-ing”:

(13) She mumbled her adoration.
 (“She expressed/signalled her adoration by mumbling.”) (Levin, 1993: 98)

This construction is discussed in Levin and Rapoport (1988: 283) as an example of lexical subordination (3f). However, Levin (1993) does not mention reaction objects with IC verbs.

The goal appears in ditransitive constructions with IC verbs (5a) and (6), although it may also surface without the theme (14a). Nevertheless, neither is it allowed in intransitive use with a *to* phrase (14b), nor with *at* in a three-argument construction (14c).

(14) a. Heather cabled Sara.
 b. *Heather cabled to Sara.
 c. *Heather cabled the news at Sara. (Levin, 1993: 206-207)

After this review of the main argument structures with verbs of communication, the empirical research will now be addressed.

3. CORPUS AND METHODS

The data for the analysis comes from the *NOW* English and Spanish corpora. These corpora have been selected first of all for their large size and current data (see Table 1). Secondly, these corpora were expected to contain many references to the verb since Twitter is a pervasive news source and journalists frequently quote or report tweets.⁴ Finally, news represents more “standard” language than oral or Twitter language; therefore, the features it contains should be considered more stable.

⁴ Kwak, Changhyun, Hosung and Moon (2010) state that nearly 85 per cent of the entire Twitter site are news-related tweets. Twitter has also been referred to as the “21st century newspaper” (<https://www.huffpost.com>).

Table 1: Description of corpora

	Source	Size (in words)	Time span
NOW (English)	Total	10,422,672,190	2010-2020
	US English	2,255,121,372	
NOW (Spanish)	Total	7,236,494,391	2012-2019
	European Spanish	1,145,901,308	

To gather the data, searches for the verbs *tweet* and *tuitear* were run on the American English and European Spanish material. Two sub-corpora of 1,000 random constructions with *tweet* and *tuitear*, respectively, were retrieved and entered into a database (*FileMaker*) for their classification. The hits contained some nominal forms – matching the bare infinitive in English (e.g. *a Thursday tweet*) and the 1st person singular present tense form in Spanish (e.g. *la política de tuiteo* ‘the politics of tweeting’) – which had to be manually removed. Participial phrases were also discarded (e.g. *a statement tweeted by the Minneapolis police, una revolución tuiteada* ‘a tweeted revolution’). Finally, some metalinguistic uses of the verb (e.g. the verb ‘*tuitear*’...) and its use in the title of a novel (*Algo tan sencillo como tuitear te quiero* ‘Something as simple as tweeting I love you’) were also removed from the Spanish data. Two final corpora of a similar size were compiled (945 examples in English and 949 in Spanish).

The examples were first classified in three different types: intransitive, direct speech and transitive. The objects in the transitive examples were then divided into sentential complements, theme objects and goal objects.

In order to test whether or not the argument structures found with *tuitear* copied those of semantically related verbs, additional samples of IC verbs in Spanish were compiled. Levin’s (1993) 18 IC verbs were reduced to five verbs in Spanish: *cablegrafiar*, *faxear*, *telefonar*, *telegrafiar* and *radiar*. Besides these verbs, *televisar* from Vázquez et al.’s (2000) list, and *cartear*, both IC verbs also included in the *DRAE*, were selected. More recent IC verbs (e.g. *emailear*, *wasapear*, *instagramear*, *facebukear*) show limited use and are not listed in the *DRAE* (for a discussion of these verbs, see Martínez Vázquez, 2021). Although the aim was to obtain samples of a similar size to that of *tuitear*, it was only possible to retrieve a random sample of 1,000 examples with *telefonar* and *televisar*. The latter mostly contained examples in adjectival function (e.g. *un debate televisado* ‘a televised debate’) which had to be manually removed. As a high number of the initial 414 hits for *radiar* and some of the 102 examples obtained with *telegrafiar* exhibited a different meaning, they also had to be discarded. Finally, *cablegrafiar* and *faxear* are almost non-existent in European Spanish and also very infrequent in American Spanish (eight examples of the former and six of the latter). Table 2 summarizes the data.

Table 2: Attested number of hits for IC verbs in NOW

	European Spanish
<i>Telefonar</i>	1,000
<i>Tuitear</i>	949
<i>Televisar</i>	265
<i>Cartear</i>	166
<i>Telegrafiar</i>	26
<i>Radiar</i>	188
<i>Cablegrafiar</i>	1
<i>Faxear</i>	0

Each example cited is followed by the date and source. Some of the examples quoted in this paper have been shortened for the sake of clarity and brevity.

4. DATA AND ANALYSIS

4.1 *Tweet* vs. *tuitear*

Table 3 shows the distribution of the main diathesis alternations found with *tweet* and *tuitear* (raw numbers). Although there is a very slight difference in size between the two samples (four examples), a visual representation of their normalized frequency is offered in Figure 2.

Table 3: *Distribution of argument structures with tweet and tuitear (raw numbers)*

	Tweet	Tuitear
Intransitive	162	253
Direct speech	389	376
Transitive	394	323

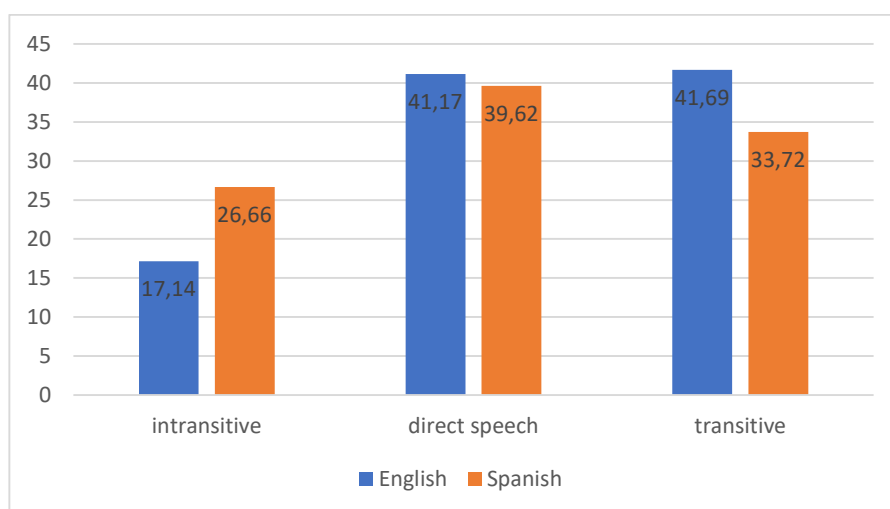


Figure 2: *Normalized distribution of argument structures (percentage)*

Direct speech is statistically similar in both languages, while there is a dissimilar use of transitive and intransitive patterns; English employs the transitive construction more frequently, while Spanish shows a slight preference for intransitive use.

4.1.1 *Direct speech*

Around 40 per cent of the uses of *tweet* and *tuitear* introduce direct speech. As shown in Table 4, the quote appears more often initially, followed by the reporting clause (62.72 per cent in English, 77.13 per cent in Spanish). In this position, Spanish obligatorily uses subject-verb inversion when the subject is expressed, as in (15a). English tends to keep the S-V order (223 examples, 89.56 per cent), but 26 examples with an inverted subject were attested, (15b).

- (15) a. “El mundo ha perdido a un músico increíblemente talentoso”, tuiteó David Guetta. (18/04/20, El Mundo)
 ‘The world has lost an incredibly talented musician, tweeted David Guetta’
 b. “Maximum attention for today’s tide,” tweeted mayor Luigi Brugnaro. (19/11/17, firstpost.com)

Table 4: *Position of tweet in reporting clauses (raw numbers)*

	Initial	Middle	Final
English	144	2	244
Spanish	86	1	289

Three reporting clauses were attested in middle position (parenthetical use), two in English and one in Spanish:

- (16) a. “If u follow the clues,” Grimes helpfully tweeted back to filmrudd, “the questions will have answers.” (20/02/19, *theringer.com*)
b. “Seguimos recibiendo -ha tuiteado el autoproclamado presidente encargado- el respaldo de la comunidad internacional”. (19/02/24, *El Periódico*)
‘We continue to receive – the self-proclaimed president in charge tweeted – the support of the international community’

4.1.2 *Intransitive constructions*

The intransitive use refers merely to activity via *Twitter*, as in (17a), with frequent circumstantial information about time, manner or place (17b).

- (17) a. You will be out of business if you don’t *tweet*, use Facebook, and social media today. (10/10/25, CNN International)
b. Donald Trump lleva sin *tuitear* ocho horas. (17/02/26, ABC.es)
‘Donald Trump has not tweeted for eight hours’

The verb in isolation preceded by a hashtag is used as an invitation for people to tweet, as in (18). Although the verb does not take an object, the message is easily recovered from the surrounding context, anaphorically in (18a) and cataphorically in (18b). The Spanish corpus examples appear with an infinitive, a form used in instructions to convey a general recommendation (RAE),⁵ but the verb also appears in Google searches with the imperative (e.g. #tuitea) and also in transitive use in both English and Spanish (#tweet it, #tuitealo).

- (18) a. #Congratulations again to the happy couple! #Share #Tweet # Email. (15/07/21, E!)
b. #Compartir #Fliepar #Tuitear #Enviar #La tumba de Franco no debería ser saqueada. (18/08/24, Libertad Digital)
‘#Share # Flip # Tweet # Send # Franco’s grave should not be looted’

Other participants involved in the communicative exchange appear in prepositional phrases. For example, a theme may be introduced by *with* (Spanish *con* and *junto a* ‘with’), as in (19). These prepositional themes may include linguistic or visual information, as shown in the screenshot of the tweet reported in (19b) (see Figure 3).

- (19) a. People tweeted back *with support for the store*. (20/05/23, *Washington Post*)
b. El español, simplemente, tuiteó *con un elocuente “Wow, Luka Doncic” y los emoticonos de un chico sorprendido, una mandarina y un aplauso*. (18/12/24, Ominutos.es)
‘The Spaniard simply tweeted with an eloquent “Wow, Luka Doncic” and the emoticons of a surprised boy, a tangerine and applause.’

⁵ <https://www.rae.es/consultas/infinitivo-por-imperativo>.



Figure 3: Tweet reported in (19b)

Interestingly, the message may be split into two different arguments, as in (20a) which contains direct speech and a visual message provided in a *with* phrase, and (20b) which combines a quote (introduced with the preposition *con*) and indirect speech.

- (20) a. “I lost my hero,” “The View” co-host tweeted *with a photo of her and her father’s hands*. (19/10/08, foxnews.com)
 b. Anna Kendrick tuiteó (*con un «holy shit»* que en España traducimos con el más protocolario «madre mía») que acababa de recordar que en su día estuvo en el reparto de «Crepúsculo». (18/12/16, *La Razón*)
 ‘Anna Kendrick tweeted (with a “holy shit” which in Spain we translate with the more formal “my mother”) that she had just remembered that she was once in the cast of “Twilight”’

The view of communication as transfer triggers the use of *at* to introduce the endpoint, both as a targeted Twitter account and in metonymical reference to the addressee (21).⁶ The goal is also introduced by *to* with direct speech (22). The counterpart of both *at* and *to* is the Spanish *a*, a preposition which introduces recipients and human direct objects (see Section 4.13). The preposition *with* (Spanish *con*) appears with recipients in a reciprocal sense (23).

- (21) a. He tweets *at hueypriest*. (14/07/14, Fast Company)
 b. Frankie tweeted *at Shelton* saying she wanted to send him a copy. (20/06/11, TMZ)
 (22) Space reporter Rachael Joy tweeted *to her fans*: “It’s not looking good”. (20/01/24, *Florida Today*)
 (23) a. Follow coverage of the event on NRN.com and tweet *with us* using #MUFSO. (19/10/17, *Nation’s Restaurant News*)
 b. Se tuiteaba *con Daniel* a través de su perfil de Twitter. (12/11/18, Qué.es)
 ‘(She) tweeted with Daniel through her Twitter profile’

The topic is most frequently introduced with *about* in English (Spanish *sobre*). Although Levin (1993) only reports the use of *about* with IC verbs, one example with *on* (24c) and another with *of* and direct speech (24d) were attested. Both prepositions correspond to the Spanish *de* ‘of’ (24e).

- (24) a. Durbin also tweeted Monday *about the bill*. (19/12/19, ksl.com)
 b. Hay más mujeres que hombres que tuitean *sobre su estado de ánimo*. (13/03/21, El País.com)
 ‘There are more women than men tweeting about their mood’
 c. He tweeted *on Dhoni’s retirement from test cricket*. (13/10/10, *TIME*)

⁶ This preposition derives from the use of the @ symbol introducing the location in email addresses, which is used here for Twitter accounts.

- d. He tweeted *of the amendment Thursday*, “Hopefully our great Republican Senators won’t fall for this!” (20/06/11, Talking Points Memo)
- e. No tuiteo de fútbol. (18/06/06, Okdiario)
‘I do not tweet of football’

Other prepositions introduce the topic together with an evaluation of the message⁷ (e.g. English *against, in favor of, in support of*; Spanish *en contra, a favor de*) as in (25). Alternatively, a topic can be expressed through non-finite adverbial clauses, as in (21b) and (26).

- (25) a. He already has done many of *the things* he Tweeted *against* from years ago - golf, vacations, etc. (17/08/18, *Variety*)
- b. En el Reino Unido es famoso por tuitear *contra los futbolistas del club que posee*. (17/03/19, *El Confidencial*)
‘In the UK he is famous for tweeting against the footballers of the club he owns’
- (26) a. El presidente comenzó a tuitear esta mañana *negando haber usado esas palabras*. (18/01/12, *Público*)
‘The president began tweeting this morning denying that he used those words.’
- c. Lunar Studios tweeted Jeffree Star *to let him know about the shoes*. (19/07/24, *Revelist*)
- d. La Reina Rania aprovechó para tuitear en árabe y en inglés *para desear felicidad y alegría* (12/01/13, *Bekia*)
‘Queen Rania took the opportunity to tweet in Arabic and English to wish happiness and joy’

Like sending verbs, *tweet* also allows for expressing the source with *from/desde*, denoting the place (e.g. *from the stadium*), instrument (e.g. *from his iPad*) or account (*from the Prime Minister’s handle*).

4.1.3 Transitive constructions

The datasets presented in Table 5 show the distribution of the main transitive constructions.

Table 5: *Main types of objects with tweet and tuitear*

		English	Spanish
Monotransitive	Sentential complements	(that)/que clause	165
		nominal relative clause	4
	Nominal	infinitive clause	0
		theme	215
Ditransitive		goal	7
		theme + goal	4
Total		395	325

The most frequent sentential complement is indirect speech (27). In English *that* can be omitted, as in (7), but Spanish requires the use of the conjunction *que* (Maldonado González, 1999: 3575). Other sentential complements attested include nominal relative clauses (28) and two rare examples with the infinitive in Spanish, as in (29).

⁷ The term is borrowed from Dirven et al. (1982: 3): “A third way to approach the transferred information is not to see it as a message or a topic, but to evaluate the information e.g. in ‘He told us a pack of lies’. Here we no longer know what may have been said, we just have the speaker’s evaluation of it”.

- (27) a. National Autistic Society tweeted *that* it was “unbelievable & shameful.” (19/09/24, *Forbes*)
 b. El presidente Donald Trump ha tuiteado *que* el pueblo de Venezuela tiene el apoyo de EEUU. (19/04/30, *El Mundo*)
 ‘President Donald Trump has tweeted that the people of Venezuela have the support of the United States’
- (28) a. In February I tweeted what was already a rapidly circulating rumor. (20/06/16, *Washington Examiner*)
 b. Tuiteo lo que me parece. (15/01/27, 20minutos.es)
 ‘I tweet what I think’
- (29) Tras dejar la cárcel Forcadell tuiteó *tener* “la conciencia tranquila de haber actuado correctamente”. (17/11/10, *Expansión.com*)
 ‘After leaving the prison Forcadell tweeted having “a clear conscience of having acted correctly”’

The occurrence of both the theme and the goal – in the dative alternation in English (30a-b) and the alternating position of goal and theme in Spanish (30c-d) – is unusual.

- (30) a. Still, they took notice and tweeted *Gretzky an image of a Tigers jersey with his No. 99 on*. (17/02/11, *Detroit Free Press*)
 b. Give us your opinion on our Facebook page or tweet *it to ABC7News* with the hashtag #DCsexed. (11/09/15, WJLA)
 c. camisetas...con una conexión bluetooth para tuitear *información a otros corredores*. (12/03/15, *El País.com*)
 ‘T-shirts...with a bluetooth connection to tweet information to other runners’
 d. En Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, el Partido Nazi Americano tuitea asiduamente *a sus más de 12.000 seguidores mensajes homófobos*. (17/04/04, *ElNacional.cat*)
 ‘In the United States, for example, the American Nazi Party regularly tweets homophobic messages to its more than 12,000 followers’

The single goal construction also shows limited use in both languages (31). Interestingly, a second goal is introduced by *at* in (31c), as observed in the double theme construction in (20). Goal objects also combine with direct speech (22) and indirect speech (32).

- (31) a. Send me an email by clicking here, or *tweet me*. (19/12/18, fool.com itself)
 b. La cantidad de personas que tuitearon a Cepeda tras su metedura de pata es innumerable. (18/10/01, *La Vanguardia*)
 ‘The number of people who tweeted Cepeda after his blunder is innumerable’
 c. Let us know your thoughts in the comments below or by tweeting *me at AdamBarnhardt!* (19/08/20, comicbook.com)
- (32) Spears ha tuiteado a Cyrus que le encantan los bailes de su videoclip. (13/06/23, *TeleCinco.es*)
 ‘Spears has tweeted Cyrus that she loves the dances of her video clip’

Finally, there is a mayor group with nominal theme objects, which comprises different semantic types: metalinguistic nouns (e.g. *phrases, suggestions, news*), visual nouns (e.g. a *photo, a pic, a screenshot*), event nouns (e.g. *concert, shooting*), announcements (*the death of the leader*) speech acts (*thank you, congratulations*), reaction objects (33) and cognate objects (34).

- (33) a. He later tweeted *his frustration*. (16/03/22, TheBlaze.com)
 b. Yoko Ono no tuiteó *sus impresiones*. (14/03/12, El País.com)
 ‘Yoko Ono did not tweet her impressions’
- (34) *el tuit* que tuiteó El Cojo de Lepanto con una imagen de zombis. (17/01/07, *La Vanguardia*)
 ‘the tweet El Cojo de Lepanto tweeted with an image of zombies’

4.2 Tuitear vs. other IC verbs in Spanish

Table 6 offers an overview of the structural patterns attested with Spanish IC verbs in *NOW*. With the exception of *tuitear* and *telegrafiar*, these verbs only allow for one or two constructional possibilities. The verb *faxear* did not appear in the European Spanish material and *cablegrafiar* only occurred once.

Table 6: Attested constructions with Spanish IC verbs in *NOW*

	Intransitive	Transitive							Direct speech
		O _{theme}	O _{goal}	OO	O _{reaction}	O _{event}	O _{cognate}	<i>que</i>	
<i>telefonar</i>	√	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>telegrafiar</i>	x	√	√	√	x	x	x	x	√
<i>faxear</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>radiar</i>	x	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
<i>televisar</i>	x	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
<i>cartear</i>	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>cablegrafiar</i>	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>tuitear</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

5. DISCUSSION

This analysis has shown that *tweet* adopts a wider variety of structural alternations than most IC verbs. These results, however, need to be interpreted with caution, since acceptance is sometimes a matter of degree with disparity among speakers and language varieties. Levin (1993: 207) cautions that the dative alternation shows “some exceptions, which are likely to vary from speaker to speaker”. This could explain why *telephone* is not attested in a ditransitive construction in the *BNC* (Baker & Ruppenhofer, 2002: 6), while 12 examples appear in DeClerck et al.’s (2011) monitor web-based data. DeClerck et al. (2011) have also spotted novel argument structures: the intransitive, the transitive + *with*-theme (e.g. *He telephoned several friends with the sad news*) and the intransitive + *to* goal (e.g. *A retired military member telephoned to the Security Forces Control Center*). They also mention “too rarely attested” examples of prepositional phrases with *unto/onto* + recipient, and *on* + theme.

This analysis of *tweet* has also revealed constructions not reported before for IC verbs. For example, parenthetical use (16), mentioned in Levin (1993) but not attested in DeClerck et al. (2011), the use of various prepositions introducing the topic, *from* + source, constructions with two themes (20a), or two goals (31c), *to* goal + direct speech (22) and reaction object constructions (33a). The structural possibilities discussed in Levin (1993) and DeClerck et al. (2011) were also attested with *tweet*, except for sentential infinitive complements and phrases with *unto/into*. However, these uses appear in Google searches (35), as is the more creative resultative construction *tweet him to death*, which offer further evidence of the open structural possibilities of *tweet*.

- (35) a. By the end of the summer, Wills tweeted *for everyone to be on alert*.
(al.com/alabamafootball)
- b. This unique Internet poll has been tweeted onto each candidate's blue check-marked Twitter account. (medium.com)
- c. Do not tweet *unto* others, what you wouldn't want tweeted *unto* yourself. (findglocal.com)

Beside intralinguistic variation, the novel constructions found could also illustrate ongoing change; IC verbs might have extended their structural possibilities by analogy with other verbs in the 18-year time-lapse between Levin's and DeClerck et al.'s studies (27-year in the case of this study).

The contrastive analysis of the English *tweet* and the Spanish *tuitear* has shown a striking structural resemblance. Direct speech is very similar in both languages, both in terms of structural behavior and frequency (Figure 2). As regards transitivity, the lower percentage of transitive patterns in Spanish could reflect its natural tendency to avoid fusing manner (instrument) and result in the same construction, using instead two separate predicates (Talmy, 1985, 2000), as in (4) and (26a). Nevertheless, in spite of its lower frequency, the variety of transitive constructions allowed with *tweet* have surprisingly also been attested in Spanish.

The analysis of the structural behavior of other Spanish IC verbs (see Table 6) has shown that *tuitear* clearly surpasses their structural possibilities. The verb *cartear* is only allowed in intransitive use, and *cablegrafiar* and *faxear*, although accepted by the RAE, are hardly used.

Tuitear is much more versatile than the other IC verbs, insofar as it can combine linguistic and visual information (see Figure 3). Moreover, it is also used to broadcast ongoing events (e.g. *tuitear un concierto* 'tweet a concert') and event objects are only allowed with *televisar* and *radiar*; the other verbs denote punctual events which cannot extend in time, except with an iterative interpretation (e.g. *She telephones me every day*). Only *tuitear* takes reaction and cognate objects. The latter are allowed because *tuitear* has both a related instrumental noun (*Twitter*) and a result noun (*tweet*), while the other IC verbs (except for *cartear* and *faxear*) are only related to the noun naming the instrument.

Direct speech has only been attested with *telegrafiar* and *tuitear*, while indirect speech has only been found with the latter. It should be noted, however, that indirect speech was more limited in Spanish than in English (see Table 5). Although direct and indirect speech typically occur with the *verba dicendi*, these do not allow for the variety of objects found with *tuitear* (e.g. **Dijo la foto/el concierto/su felicidad/el fallecimiento del lider*. **'He said the pic, the concert, his frustration, the death of their leader'*).

The variety of objects found with *tuitear* give rise to extensions of meaning not determined by the lexical root. It is important to stress that verbs containing the prefix *tele-* (from Greek 'remote') inherently contribute the transfer component, also implied by the electromagnetic waves involved in the lexical meaning of *radiar*. *Tuitear* being derived from the proper noun *Twitter* only relates to the instrument, although some speakers may also associate it with the sound component that originated the coinage (the tweet of birds). The manner meaning in *tuitear* becomes secondary information, while the object denotes the main event (in parentheses in 36), as in Levin and Rapoport's (1988) lexical subordination process (3). It is worth noting that the *DRAE* only mentions two meanings for *tuitear*: 'communicate by tweets' or 'send with a tweet', none of which cover the meaning in (36c-e).

- (36) a. Tuiteó que... ‘(s/he) tweeted that’ (say)
 b. Tuiteó la foto. ‘(s/he) tweeted the pic’ (send)
 c. Tuiteó el concierto. ‘(s/he) tweeted the concert’ (broadcast)
 d. Tuiteó su frustración. ‘(s/he) tweeted his frustration’ (express)
 e. Tuiteó el fallecimiento de su líder. ‘(s/he) tweeted the death of their leader’ (announce)

Another finding worth noting is the unexpected behavior of the verb *telegrafiar*. The analysis performed here has revealed a novel use of *telegrafiar* that does not involve the use of a telegraph. The verb appears with the meaning ‘anticipate’, which is not mentioned in the *DRAE*. As a matter of fact, this meaning has been ‘borrowed’ from the English verb *telegraph* which includes it, namely, to “convey (an intentional or unconscious message), especially with facial expression or body language: *a tiny movement of her arm telegraphed her intention to strike* | *I don’t own a wedding ring—this telegraphs a sad story*” (*Oxford Dictionary of English*). Here, the prefix *tele-* denotes temporal, not spatial distance, as in (37). Not surprisingly, in this novel borrowed meaning the verb *telegrafiar* has been attested with a reaction object (37c), which suggests that the structural borrowing evidenced by *tuitear* might be extending to other verbs. More curiously, the verb is also used as a substitute for *tuitear*, probably as a way to avoid the English root (37d).

- (37) a. Saúl telegrafió un centro al segundo palo. (18/01/12, *El Desmarque*)
 ‘Saul telegraphed a cross to the far post’
 b. No sabe callarse y siempre termina telegrafiendo sus intenciones antes de tiempo. (17/12/10, *El Confidencial*)
 ‘He does not know how to shut up and he always ends up telegraphing his intentions ahead of time’
 c. Melania es cada vez más audaz en su empeño por telegrafiar su desdén hacia Donald.⁸ (17/05/27, *La Vanguardia*)
 ‘Melania is becoming bolder in her endeavor to telegraph her disdain for Donald’
 d. ¿Cómo se puede telegrafiar la vida en 140 caracteres? (12/05/06, *La Opinión de Murcia*)
 ‘How can life be telegraphed in 140 characters?’

In sum, Spanish IC verbs and related verbs of communication do not exhibit the structural flexibility of *tuitear*. More importantly, *tuitear* appears with reaction objects which, it is claimed, are not allowed in Spanish (Mateu, 2012), although emerging cases with manner of speaking verbs have been reported (Martínez Vázquez, 2014). This unprecedented structural flexibility of *tuitear* and its resemblance to the English *tweet* would confirm the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of this paper concerning structural borrowing.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

My empirical analysis has shown that the argument structures found with *tuitear* are almost exact copies of the patterns found with *tweet*. An analysis of the other European Spanish IC verbs included in *DRAE* has demonstrated that the behavior of *tuitear* is unique among the members of this class. These findings would confirm the constructional borrowing hypothesis.

⁸ In reference to her physical gestures and acts.

The grammatical system of a language has been claimed to be rigid, not inclined to change easily and resistant to borrowing (Heine & Kuteva, 2005: 2). According to Trips and Stein (2019: 239), changes in grammar require “a strong motivation, either due to social dominance and/or to the attractiveness of linguistic structure”. The dominance of English in the digital media is beyond doubt (e.g. Edwards, 2012: 85; De Mooij, 2014: 47; Schmidt & Diemer, 2015: 11), as is the fact that Twitter is a highly influential international channel which feeds information worldwide.⁹

The “attractiveness” of the English linguistic structures may be explained by their abbreviating nature. Tweets are short and easy to reproduce unaltered, hence the abundance of direct speech. Nevertheless, their conciseness also favors easy transformation into syntactical objects (e.g. *He tweeted his denial, his protest, his frustration*). The resulting syntactic structure integrates two events in one single clause: the communicative transfer and the use of the instrument causing the transfer. This type of conflation, or “telescoped representation” (Talmy, 2000: 11), is common in English, yet rare in Spanish (Talmy, 1985, 2000). However, modern society favors conciseness, and journalists may find in the conflated construction of English an effective “attractive” means of condensing their messages.

Another possible explanation for this structural borrowing involves translation. Patzelt (2011) argues that most of the morphosyntactic patterns borrowed from English are result of direct translations of English news into Spanish. Kranich, Becher, Höder and House (2011) also highlight the importance of translation as a source of contact-induced language change.

Twitter is the favorite broadcast instrument channel of world leaders and celebrities.¹⁰ It is also the preferred news feed. Trump’s and other VIP’s tweets are news that is instantly translated into several languages. The immediateness required by today’s society, where information is rapidly outdated, obliges instant, sometimes automatic translation, which might play a role in the copying process. In fact, *Twitter* offers automatic translation through Bing Translator to promote more extensive broadcasting of tweets, and instant translators tend to keep the linguistic structure of the source language. By way of illustration, both the Bing and Google translators turn a sentence like, *She tweeted her anger* into *Ella tuiteó su ira* and *He tweeted that he was ill* becomes *Tuiteó que estaba enfermo*.

In line with Barðal (2003), the constructional versatility of *tweet* and *tuitear* could be attributable to its social extension. In contrast to other IC verbs, *Twitter* can be used in smartphones; therefore, it accompanies us wherever we go. The vast amount of Twitter activity may have influenced the variety of structures we use to refer to it.

On a more theoretical level, my study has provided additional evidence of mixed typological behavior. My findings add to a growing body of literature on typological mixed behavior (Beavers, Levin & Tham, 2010; Croft, Bar, Hollmann, Sotirova & Taoka, 2010; Martínez Vázquez, 2015; Caballero & Paradis, 2018; among others) and also offer a new explanation – remote contact-induced borrowing from the Twittersphere – for the emergence of such patterns in a Romance language.

My empirical findings have provided evidence of novel constructions with the verb *tuitear* which, it has been contended, copy the English patterns. However, I have only examined news material over the last decade, which can only confirm that journalists and commentators copy English patterns when reporting on leaders’ tweets. Neither has my study substantiated that such patterns have extended to other speakers and contexts, nor does it demonstrate a stable

⁹ According to a study, involving an online survey of more than 4,700 participants, almost 86 per cent of Twitter users use it to keep abreast of the news, with 74 per cent accessing it on a daily basis (uea.ac.uk).

¹⁰ A recently published list of the most followed accounts on Twitter (www.brandwatch.com/blog/most-twitter-followers/) shows a great dominance of musicians, in spite of the association of *Twitter* with world events and politics.

change in Spanish grammar. To corroborate these points, more decades need to pass and data from other registers would have to be analyzed.

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