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ABSTRACT

*¡Me recontra encanta el Twitter! A quantitative look at online use of intensifier recontra in Argentine and Peruvian Spanish.*

This paper presents a preliminary quantitative analysis of written data from the social media application, Twitter, in which a relatively new linguistic feature, the use of *recontra* as an intensifier, is analyzed and compared among the Argentine and Peruvian varieties of Spanish. In a preliminary analysis of diachronic and synchronic data available in the Corpus del español (Davies 2016) and the CORPES XXI (Real Academia Española 2018), we found that the use of *recontra* as an intensifier is most prevalent in these two varieties of Latin American Spanish, which led us to restrict our analysis to these specific regions. As a point of interest, as of this writing the word *recontra* is not found in the Diccionario de la lengua española and its use as an intensifier is not listed in the Real Academia's Diccionario de americanismos. There is evidence, however, of substantial use of *recontra* since the 15th century in opposition to *la contra* and later of *¡re-contra!* as an interjection (RAE: CORDE 2018), both of which uses are important to analyze diachronically in tracing the evolution of *recontra* and its emergence as an intensifier.

Among the written corpora consulted for the present study, the first intensifier use of *recontra* comes from a 1968 Chilean text by Francisco Gutiérrez and reads as follows:

(1) Nos fue **recontra** bien la pesca...(RAE:CORDE 2018)

In this linguistic environment, *recontra* fulfills the same syntactic and semantic function as *muy* and could also be substituted by other regional or popular intensifiers in Spanish such as *re-* or *súper*. Even so, in the more recent tokens of *recontra* found in the data for this study, its use is not limited to cases where it could only be a substitute for *muy* or otherwise complete an adjectival intensifier function, but it has been noted that its use extends to pre-verbal collocation where it exercises a unique intensifier function that could not be substituted with a canonical adverb that is more restricted syntactically. In (2) below, *recontra* is found in pre-verbal position, and even imposes itself between the clitic pronoun and the verb, which canonical adverbs are restricted from doing.

(2) Me estaba sacando la ropa y me **recontra** golpie (*sic*) el codo con la mesita de luz...  
(Twitter 2018)

The findings of this study contribute to the body of work on intensifier use in general, explain the geographical extension of *recontra* as an intensifier as well as interpret the syntactic freedom of the use of *recontra* through comparison of the varieties of Spanish explored. The data in this study also suggest varying semantic interpretations of the use of *recontra* among varieties of Spanish as well as statistically significant differences of use by region based on the polarity of the utterance in which the intensifier appears.

KEYWORDS: Intensifier use in Spanish, quantitative analysis of virtual written corpora, diachronic/synchronic change, Argentine/Peruvian Spanish.

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