#LANGUAGE: How Hashtags Connect Second Language Users

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Stefany Andrea López Quintero

To my family, friends and my beloved professors

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of hashtags on second language learning in the context of digital communication. We explore the history and functionality of hashtags, their role on tracking and keeping second language information, and their potential benefits for language learners. The research highlights the importance of literacy practices with hashtags and underscores the need for further exploration, particularly in the Colombian context. This work contributes to a deeper understanding of language learning in the digital age and prompts consideration of hashtags as a transformative tool in language teaching.

Keywords: Social networks, new literacies, linguistic practices, autonomous learning, second language.

Resumen

Este estudio explora el impacto de los hashtags en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas en el contexto de la comunicación digital. Exploramos la historia y funcionalidad de los hashtags, su papel en el seguimiento y mantenimiento de la información de una segunda lengua, y sus beneficios potenciales para los estudiantes de idiomas. La investigación destaca la importancia de las prácticas de alfabetización con hashtags y subraya la necesidad de una mayor exploración, particularmente en el contexto colombiano. Este trabajo contribuye a una comprensión más profunda del aprendizaje de idiomas en la era digital e incita a considerar los hashtags como una herramienta transformadora en la enseñanza de idiomas.

Palabras Clave: Redes sociales, Nuevas literacidades, prácticas lingüísticas, aprendizaje autónomo, segunda lengua.

Introduction

Social networks have had a gigantic cultural and social impact. The use of social networks has transcended a little more than what could be given in an electronic device or limiting its content to entertainment only. Social networks and multifunctionality have been presented by the interaction of the users themselves. Then, it is the users, the participants of these spaces who have modified and changed them to other categories. Now, social networks can be elements of the new literacies. Analyzing the different scenarios of new learning experiences is a work that develops constantly in the life of teachers. Thus, experiences happen differently for everyone. What began as a personal and autonomous activity became an object of study on the functionality of an element which is so popular in all social networks, but whose potential to follow the same topic is so little used and explored.

One of the linguistic practices that users appropriated in the use of the platforms was the hashtag. For this research project it was important to identify the hashtags that were used in the observation of linguistic practices to recognize the functionalities that users highlighted and enhanced in spaces or social networks such as X, Instagram and TikTok. The analysis of the hashtag allowed that the main practice of the users would be interaction and tracking of communities and topics about second languages. It is necessary to highlight that there are elements that could not be explored, but that have theoretical support, such as linguistic expressions, semiotic elements, communication, trends and language, which could be identified while analyzing certain hashtags.

The exploration of these elements (#) looks a little more into the dynamics of social interaction that have been created in digital spaces and that lend themselves to the context of

autonomous learning, the use of technologies, identity and the application of tools in new environments.

The importance of hashtags, after this project, goes beyond its digital characteristic. The connections, the exploration and interaction with language create new ways for cultural, linguistic and social integration and exchange. As demonstrated by the research work of the academic Michel Zappavigna, in studies such as Searchable Talk: Hashtags and social media Metadiscourse or the Discourse of Twitter and social media, in which she highlights the interaction and symbols to enact the practice of a second language from another perspective.

This research continues with the idea that some academics have raised about the function of the hashtag more than an algorithmic item, it is the gate that opens to information that holds the language in a chronological, constant, organized and updated way. Although most of the data, evidence and entries collected for this project were from users from European countries, there was participation of users who joined the hashtags from Latin American countries. Then, getting into this information network is a way of wanting to be connected with what is happening with language and what people are doing with language in other spaces. Therefore, this project supports an analysis of the practices of a second language, the new dynamics in the new literacies and the expression of language from digital interactions. This research, besides having an investigative character, is an invitation for the reader to be encouraged to understand other media, other environments, other identities and to know what each person can do with each landscape he/she encounters.

Problem Statement

Nowadays, everything could go viral. People can track information instantaneously thanks to new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Inside ICTs, different types of technologies, such as social networking sites (SNS), have become very popular. They allow people to upload photos and continue to shape our culture in real-time. Precisely, these app settings have structured how information can be shared on social media. The information is now available predominantly via video, Instagram stories, reels, posts, and tweets, and the information is everywhere, all at once. In 2009, hashtags started showing up on Twitter (now called X); since then, they have become another way of keeping information up to date.

These days, online and offline information is primarily presented in English. The use of the English language has spread into various spaces, including online platforms like social networks. These platforms attract users from around the world, who may have diverse native languages but also use English. Due to the integration of social media in daily life, this has led to academics, educators, and researchers to address their attention to the field of Second Language Literacy. This raises a concern: What is the experience of second language users who browse social networks? They are indeed engaged in something significant. They have been using hashtags. As a matter of fact, Solmaz (2011) has pointed out that "hashtags have an important role in the identification of a discourse and formation of a network around various values" (p. 205) which support similar thought from Abel, Celik et al (2011, p. 1-17) who noted that hashtags have helped users create topics of conversations and gathered those sharing similar interests. The reason is that a hashtag could attach a trackable, conversational topic of interest by focusing the information in just one space, a tag. Inside a hashtag, there is no fading out of data. Each piece of information collected can be kept there indefinitely.

Second language users in social media have been linking each other by joining through tags, which lead them to discussions or talks not only about grammar topics but also memes, general questions, recommendations, achievements, and some other categories. Zappavigna (2012) has settled on the ideas of "searchable talk and ambient affiliations" (p. 14) Searchable talk refers to using hashtags to search for and engage in conversations and information sharing. Likewise, ambient affiliations can be understood as a form of online community-building through hashtag usage. Zappavigna also describes ambient affiliation as "a form of online communion through hashtagging" (p. 83) Thus, ambient affiliations are considered forms where users may not necessarily interact directly but participate in collective hashtag activities. These concepts have had a domino effect, leading to various communicative and interaction situations across different social networks. Indeed, their influence has extended beyond a single platform, impacting other online spaces.

While there have been previous studies on the use of tags, the functionality of hashtags in language learning is relatively unexplored. People have associated hashtags with social media trends. However, in the case of Colombia, there is a quiet absence of research on the correlation between hashtags and second language users. This represents a lack of information in the field of English language education. "Learners can reach authentic discourse communities relatively easily if appropriate hashtag literacy practices are employed" (Solmanz, 2017, p. 212, up to the present time, there is no clarity on detailed ways that could carry advantages on by using hashtags, however it is important to fill the breach with knowledge on the practical benefit of hashtag for second language users.

Previously, it mentioned hashtag literacy practices. It might be kind of hard to relate to literacy, but, according to Gee (1989), literacy is "a socially accepted association among ways of

using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network" (p. 1). Indeed, it describes what is happening behind hashtagging and precisely, people in an autonomous way participate of actions and activities which become meaningful just for the fact, those activities made them involve more on communicative situations boosting their interactions with others who understand the same code and align them with significant semiotic features which they are not aware of.

Second-language users might be aware of hashtagging. In Colombia, hashtags are not as popular as in other countries, where people are discovering and gathering each other through hashtags. Like it was mentioned before, people might not do hashtagging practices. Tag's background is only known by communities in which they understand its role, interactions, codes, audience, and topics, all this is because of the literacy and practice spectrum. Just to mention a case, during 2021, there was a digital protest against the government regarding a national strike. Therefore, K-pop users located in Colombia started to show what was happening at the time. What began as a tweet and thread with a bunch of memes, jokes, opinions, and then reports, became a significant hashtag-driven activism tactic and movement. As a result, Lombana and Rodriguez (2023) analyzed an amount of over 134,144 tweets to prove their point on algorithm functionalities, multimodal contents and spread of information by hashtags. According to Lombana and Rodriguez (2023), the results show that algorithmic resistance, hashtag hijacking, and spam were effectively deployed within K-pop activism, enabling the sabotage of the hashtag publics that sought to stigmatize protesters and supported the use of force against them.

As a result of research findings, Messina (2007) points out that hashtags have been working more than just tracking content and uploading updates online the role of hashtags in second language has gained more than just an academic status, instead this conjunction has pursued far-

reaching implications, passing through media literacy which is the closest field into it. The pedagogical approach is not only for educators but also those who want to understand the linguistic, communicative and literacy of digital dynamics nowadays. Tags go beyond its own identity as just a sign, in other word it has transcended to become a symbol that represents a whole new version of many and different kinds of multi- universes across social networks.

The critical review of the literature and the analysis of different data that I collected aim to develop the idea that is questioned at the beginning. In the first instance, one of the purposes is the analysis of the academic studies and findings that have been made in the direction of the use of social networks of second language users, but the focus was the analysis of hashtags and their use in the new practices. It is important to emphasize that this study takes as a reference not only the theoretical ideas but also the practices applied in the methodological order of the studies consulted.

Another purpose of this study is to provide some details about the current state of hashtags, the changes that have emerged and to show what has been identified from the data obtained, which in turn have driven this study. As a guiding thread, the research question, *How do second language users use hashtags on social networks for language practices that encourage communication and active participation in their target language?* allows us to evaluate the new linguistic practices in digital spaces or environments such as social networks. It also aims to understand the use of hashtags nowadays, how users interact with them and what is the importance of hashtags within the digital ecosystem, to argue and illustrate that a good practice of hashtags will allow second language users to stay in close contact, track it, keep it, improve it and practice it.

Conceptual Framework

Hashtag

Different research findings have shown details about what a hashtag is. However, the beginnings of tags remain during 2007 on Twitter (X since 2023). This use discovery is granted to Marco Messina who made one of the very first "tweets" to tag an opinion with the following hashtag #barcamp. To clarify, according to Caleffi (2015) "The use of hashtags was introduced on Twitter as a way to classify messages (tweets) according to the topic, thus allowing users to easily search for specific content and share information related to it". Another perspective on hashtag says, "a user can either initiate a hashtag or participate in an ongoing discourse through a hashtag" (Solmaz, 2012), which allows them to easily track ongoing topics. A hashtag is identified by a keyword plus a # (hash). Then, this is how it functions: individuals type a keyword followed by a hash, instantly creating an index that associates all entries using the same pattern or hashtag on any platform it is used.

Social Networking Sites

Based on the thought that any user might be anyone connected to a Social Networking Site (Facebook, X, TikTok, among others) was able to create a hashtag, people started to focus on what they were for, and time over time, what they become for. Therefore, content online began to set off questioning academics and the education field was not the exception to the trends. As a result, English education, but more specifically Second language field as an attempt to enhance and understand the new arising ways of learning and social customs in the increasing use of technology and digital platforms, which made them seek their potential features for teaching and learning. Due to English having spread linguistically and culturally speaking, it has settled as a dominating language. Songs, media, content, memes, and many other aspects of the real world have been

mediated by using English. Now with the role of Social Networks Sites and technological development of digital devices as cellphones, English input is not only offline-real world but online.

Approaching to Concept of Second Languages

Gomez and Uribe (2015) define second languages as "describes communication systems present in a specific context that operate next to (sometimes with) the mother language in that location". Despite there it exists a structured linguistic code people who belong to a community recognize, when an arising and predominant language gets into the community from small to long groups, in addition to this, Gómez and Uribe (2015) mentioned that "second languages emerge because the context itself and its inhabitants make it happen".

Literacy Practices

Hence, Social Networks Sites do not differ from second language studies, on the contrary, they have been useful to track new language experiences and manifestations. This is what scholars have called "new literacies". According to Mora (2014) "Literacy today entails the discussion of the multiplicity of forms in which individuals and communities construct and interpret oral and written texts" (Micro-paper No 7) furthermore, Lankshear and Knobel (2006) question when it is appropriate to refer to a particular literacy as being a new literacy and why the category of new literacies may be a useful one. To categorize new literacies, social network could be considered as one of the born literacies. Álvarez (2018) recognize that "The construction of views […] is not only mediated by teachers, but also by other resources to which students have access, such as movies, social network- ing, and language learning websites. Furthermore, it brings to the importance of literacy practices, Brian Street (2006), for example, defines literacy practices as "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts" (p. 5).

Originally, Scribner and Cole interpreted new ways for literacy practices by recognizing the social values, "These ways are 'recurrent' – they are socially recognized as patterns of activity – and are engaged in on a regular basis under these socially recognized patterned descriptions."(p. 84).

Digital Literacy

In other words, the patterns, and activities are emerging and the reason why it is the transforming functionalities that people are given to platforms and digital experiences through the social practices they have gotten involved in. Above it focused on literacy and what literacy practices have become. Likewise, it is necessary to point out people are opening the big literacy umbrella just as Barton, et al (cited by Gleason) refer that literacy practices are one way or another "what people do with language" Then people are making something happen. Certainly, technology has had an influence on people, and as an answer to that technology has been influenced back. Gleason (2018) points out that digital technologies are socially mediated; people experiment with them and adapt them for their own use, as in the creation of the hashtag. Besides, Nichols and LeBlanc (2020) dig deeper in this, "digital literacy offers opportunities both for reflective teaching and for engaging students in authentic inquiry about what it means to live and learn in a society increasingly dependent on digital platforms" within practices and social replying on digital activities, it's necessary to catch the eye on interactions beyond practices likewise the spaces where it is something happening, to observe and explore the new setting for values and beliefs. Besides, to understand "how platforms never operate in isolation but are defined by their relationship with platforms and programs" (Nichols & LeBlanc, 2020) There is already a computerized perspective of the functionality of this element. The meaning changes once again and the user transforms this sign into something else.

Searchable Talk

The concept of searchable talk has been brought to life by Michel Zappavigna, (2015) defined that "the drive to make our discourse readily findable by others has become a prominent social relation, realized by a range of online communicative practices" (p. 1). Therefore, there is a bunch of data that has been spread on the internet with bombings and tons of information on social media platforms. Hence it is necessary to group topics, posts, videos and so on which hashtags has the functionality to keep and track a thread of information related to. Hashtags have transcended their initial functions, fostering aspects of informatics, linguistics, and semiotics. As Zappavigna (2015) explains, that many approaches to understanding hashtags are based on the notion that hashtags facilitate conversation (Rossi & Magnani, 2012) or discussion (p. 2). Zappavigna's concept emphasizes the significant roles hashtags play in tracking and gathering data within one space. The concept that Zappavinga stands for it's about the major roles that hashtag could reach out for tracking and keeping data on a single or a set of platforms. Approaching this term, Solmaz (2017) agrees that "this way of discourse tagging leads us to `searchable talk` and enables our discourses to be found by other users with whom users' bond around particular values".

Ambient Affiliations

It is not something new that most of new literacies spin around social network sites (SNS's) since these platforms have emerged, they have become in language learning environments with an informal perspective likewise they have developed countless of opportunities to language learners. Social media has made such as impact even on the way they work for. Aldermar (2017) makes his point highlighting the potential of SNS's at integrating these environments into another context, like educational. In her studies, Zappavigna (2012) examines the patterns of social media nature

environments. Also, the richness on language exchange back to the beginnings of these platforms. Accordingly, she highlights the impact of these features on digital literacies.

Hence, Zappavigna and Martin (2017) distinguished a "discursive system, referred to as 'communing affiliation' for describing how values are positioned as socially aligned in three ways: by being directed at communities (convoking), entering into relationships with other potential value positions (finessing), and being foregrounded interpersonally in various ways (promoting). Now, this means that the more one interacts into an environment, the more the sense of belonging increase to participate. Consequently, Solmaz (2012) presented on his study according to Zappavigna that "Ambient affiliation` is defined as `a form of online communion through hashtagging` [...] and it is `ambient in the sense that social media users may not be interacting directly, but instead participating in mass performances of hashtagging or contributing to iterations [...]" (Zappavigna, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, users find these spaces that also set up a certain niche.

Methodology

This project focuses on tracking and linguistic interaction through the use of hashtags to improve their functionality for second language users as a literacy practice. The data collected comes from a variety of the most popular platforms like X, Instagram and TikTok which employed them techniques such as content analysis, discourse analysis, and correlation. These methods collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of how the data can be categorized. The methodology involves a descriptive analysis of the dynamics, patterns and what Zappavigna (2012) mentioned "environment", personal experiences and media interactions of users.

To address the question -How do second language users on social networks employ hashtags for language practices to communicate and engage with their target language? - observation was a crucial role. This observational approach aimed to identify the characteristics or patterns which users displayed during the process of hashtagging for linguistic practices. The main objective of this project is to distinguish the ongoing interactions facilitated by specific hashtags and the results they have obtained so far. The descriptive analysis was based on a variety of evidence, including screenshots of tweets (now X-responses), Instagram captions, and TikTok hashtags.

The main objective of this project is to distinguish the ongoing interactions facilitated by specific hashtags and the results they have yielded so far. The descriptive analysis was based on a diversity of evidence, including screenshots of tweets (now X-responses), Instagram captions, and TikTok hashtags. From an ethnographic standpoint, it is mandatory to state that the research methodology adopts a qualitative approach to look deeper into the online/digital language practices of second language users on social networks, with a specific focus on their use of the foreign language. Hence what it started with observation, reading and analysis of the outcomes were

necessary to know how many times this hashtag was used. It would have been so worthy to know where they come from the highest peak of the use of the hashtags, but it didn't work as it was thought. However, what it was found. Therefore, the current project is aimed to show and describe the creations of different conditions of language in use by people tag under the view of autonomous learners and focus on what are the new standpoints of this user current conditions regardless to language.

The study encompassed multiple social networking platforms, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These platforms were selected based on their popularity and diverse user bases, allowing for a broader exploration of second language users and their hashtag practices. the criteria taken to choose the mentioned platform were based on ethnography, to support this, Rapp (2018) stated that it is an ethnographic method in which the fieldworker's experience is investigated together with the experience of other observed social actors. Furthermore, the researcher could be allowed to structure the study within two perspective (user and researcher) ethnography claims `being critical about personal experiences in the development of the research being undertaken, or about experiences of the topic being investigated` (Méndez, 2013, p. 281). This dual perspective encourages the depth and reflexivity of the study, providing an understanding of how second language users connect with hashtags and bring nuances to literacies.

Referring to Ethnography, its recognition of human societies and its constantly sense of evolution to understand social codes are very significant. In their contributions to ethnography, #TeamLaV (2020) maintains that "the approaches that researchers use to study those social interactions and surroundings should adapt to those changes and evolve as well." (Micro-paper No 68) consequently, They stand out the Ethnography approach and argue for an idea that goes beyond,

Digital Ethnography. #TeamLaV stated that "Digital ethnography, therefore, is interested in studying for the growing influence and presence of the internet and other technologies in people's daily lives". (p.1) which it has led to observe critically the researcher own experiences mixed with the dynamics of interactions from an environment (Zappavigna, 2012) digitally created by others has come arise.

In the entries participated second Language Users, they shared content and used hashtags within a main topic and tags target. In addition, all kinds of interactions were valuable. There was not a determinate sample size but there were several sample interactions. It was crucial to get as many data as possible. Hence, the collection of screenshots to prove the experience was necessary. After, an AI oversaw the collected-data analysis, the Application Programming Interface (API), gathered numerical metrics related to hashtags usage. What this tool mean is that provides an answer to the need for insight into factors such as the frequency and reach of hashtags. Therefore, the API facilitated the gathering of quantitative data, such as frequency of hashtag usage, popular hashtags and user engagement metrics.

As a collector of the findings, the ethnography worked to identify many topics of interested those users posted online. As a result, I agreed to Glesne (2010) in order to collect user-generated content, conversations and hashtags usage by dividing them into the following categories: sense of humor (Jokes, memes and funny comments), questions (language or language-related concerns), celebrations and suggestions. The categories were chosen in relation to Zappavigna's study on ambient affiliations in language learning contexts, but in this project the focus is on the topics that lead users to share information for a second language practice. Upon which Solmaz (2017) also divides the analysis of hashtags into 3 categories: following and participating in live events,

Celebrations and losses, Memes, and Sense of humor (p. 210). This was useful to outline the analysis in relation to the purpose of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the entire data collection process, ethical considerations were primary. User privacy and data confidentiality were strictly respected. In addition, the study followed the terms of service and guidelines of each social media platform accessed, ensuring responsible and respectful participation. It is necessary to mention that the interactions collected, the samples that may be in this project are public, but it was decided to keep the identity of the users with other names or in some cases the name of the user is omitted in some images.

Findings

In the following figures you can see tweet entries (X) that correspond to the year 2021, they were also registered in February. In figure one there are 3 hashtags (#studytwt, #studygram, #langtwt) the user @gladlyglobal is a public account and at the time (2021) it was a growing community for second language users. It did not have much interaction, but it was the first time the hashtag #langtwt and the others mentioned appeared. In fact, the appearance of these hashtags in the interface of, at that time twitter and now X, can be attributed to the reading of the algorithm by tweet related to the practice of a second language.

Fig. 1 *First post identified*

Here begins the search for hashtags, so why did these hashtags appear out of nowhere? When clicking on each of them, it showed content such as posts, information and not limited only to English language as is the case in Figure 2. in this post, a user wrote: "Lowkey thinking of making me a #studytwt account to practice Korean mostly" in this post, the user suggested creating an account where there is only content related to the practice of Korean language and be able to keep track with the hashtag #studytwt. Up to the time of the study or during the year 2021 and

following years there was no trend in this (#studytwt) or any hashtag mentioned. The use of these hashtags was measured by users who frequent profiles or accounts with some characteristic of study, community or individuals with similar searches in terms of a second language practice.
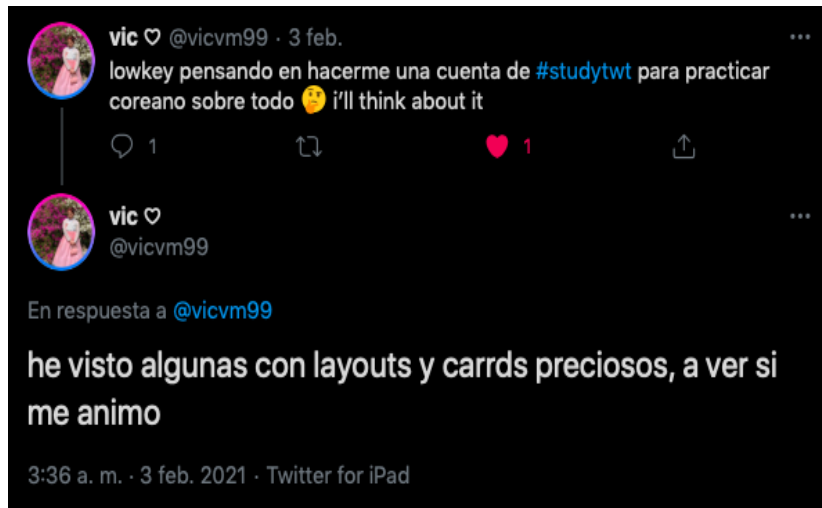
Fig. 2 *Post in Spanish with an English hashtag*

Now after having identified some hashtags, an interaction was attempted with a second language: Korean. It was decided not to do it in English to try the effectiveness of the message in a code other than English and to try to check if the response was only obtained in replies that were only about the English language. When posting the personal entry which quotes the following "Tomorrow I will go to university. Tomorrow is my first day," a user responds with feedback and provided a correction that improved the grammar and sentence structure. The feedback was in English, and the return response was also in English. This can be evidenced in Figure 3.

Tracking hashtags interactions and participations.

Now, evidence from 2023 will be shown, entries in X that served to identify and corroborate the characteristics that Zappavigna raises about the environmental affiliation. The hashtagging in #langtwt in Figure 4 made it possible to visualize a personal introduction that structures a profile of a user who shows interest in other languages and presents the status of the languages spoken. This type of personal introductions is common to see in this hashtag, observing that every person who uses the hashtag and in a certain way shows interest in belonging to the community that is being developed by this hashtag is similar to a credential. In addition, this user obtained a response, an interaction was established which, according to Borau et al (2009) "they need a chance to actively produce language and the chance to use English as a tool of communication. This calls for

instructional methods and tools promoting 'active' learning that present opportunities for students to express themselves and interact in the target language" (p.78).

Fig. 3 *An example of a feedback asked by a hashtag post.*

Fig. 4 Introduction users themselves into hashtag entries

Once it was identified that they were not only introducing themselves but also generated questions or polls as in Figure 5 and 6, it was related to another feature (Zappavigna) about concerns. This type of interactions obtained more views, responses and reach for the user who asked the question, for those who responded and for those who discovered this because of the algorithm and the popularity of hashtagging with #langtwt. In addition, in Figure 7 there is a poll and shows user's replies and they not only participate in the poll by voting for one of the options but also participate with an intervention to add more information or a point of view on the poll

target. The user who creates this situation remains in interaction with the users who participated, this created a thread and an ambient of feedback and communication.

Fig. 5 *A type of inquiry that users use to make.*

Fig. 6 A thread of replies from post in figure 5.

Fig. 7 *A thread of replies from a survey.*

Relation with other social platforms

By the end of 2021, Elon Musk announced a possible purchase of the Twitter platform. Twitter presented some irregularities and finally it was announced that the platform would be sold. Thus, it is acquired by Elon Musk in October 2022. Users see this situation and evaluate the possible changes that the platform will have. Due to this purchase of the social network, users look for other platforms to continue with the same environment that already have and contain some hashtags. This is the case of Figure 8. This entry presents a Discord channel that was created as a plan B to redirect users who use certain accounts and certain hashtags to a new ecosystem. In the image, opinions are called by means of the hashtag #langtwt and from there a response is generated from an account that so far has a community of users who have interests in second languages.

Fig. 8 *An example of joining to other second language communities.*

Below in figure 9, the users created activities through language challenges to keep up with the practice of the second language that each person practices. In the image there is an activity about a tweet or a post on Instagram that contains the study session that each one uses with the language. In addition, some of the other challenges (or activities) were to answer questions such as: What was the last word you learned? Why do you recommend the language you study? How

do you order a coffee in your target language? On the other hand, it is necessary to highlight that

in the entry made by the account that promotes this challenge, they focus the attention on the use


of hashtags to support each other and to be able to see and follow the content.

Fig. 9 A language challenge post.

After beginning a transition to other platforms such as Instagram and Discord, in the case

of the last one there are rooms or channels that have special themes related to the practice of a

second language. Not to go into details, in the discord channel that became popular in X an

interaction was created to validate the use and scope of hashtags for this project. After a series of

participations in the discord channel such as making a personal presentation, giving opinions,

sending curious facts about the English and Korean language, sending and sharing memes, recommending language study channels, a virtual meeting was held with a user from Canada who offered free online meetings in English to correct texts, to talk or any other type of practice in English. Figure 10 shows that the user joined a meeting and shared tips to improve writing in
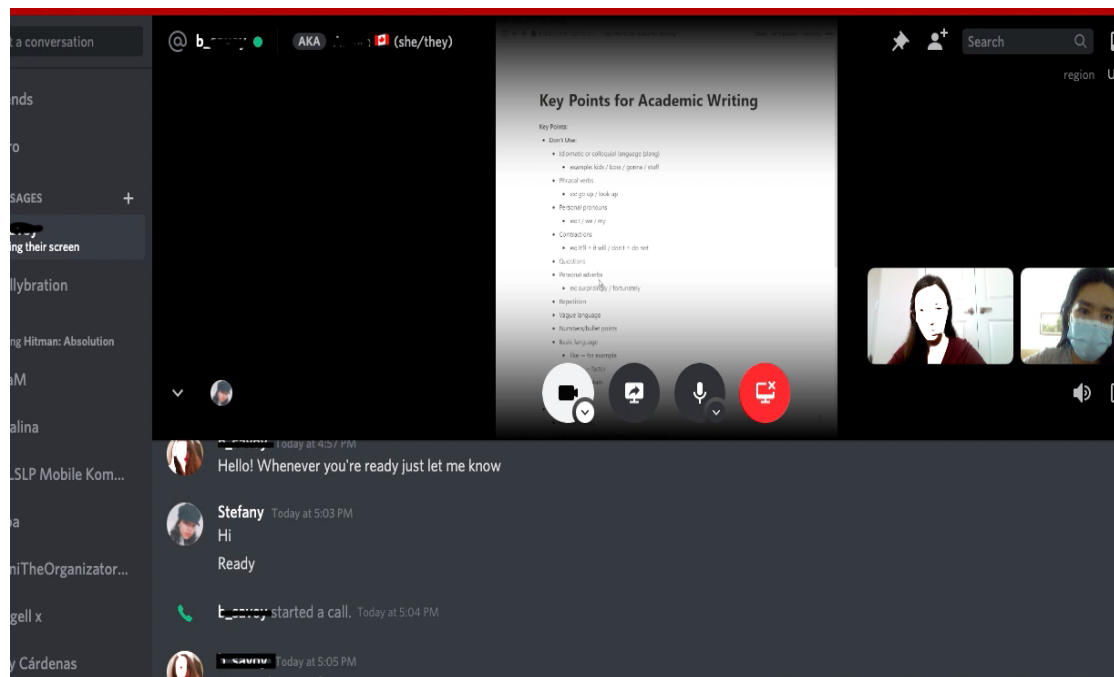
English.

Fig. 10 *An example of live feedback between two users.*

Now, on other platforms such as Instagram and TikTok there are spaces for hashtags. Although there are accounts that are responsible for creating content with the theme of second languages, it has not yet been possible to identify certain hashtags that carry the same theme or create an interaction in thread or contain a pattern or is the entrance to a more structured ecosystem. However, hashtags still have the functionality to contain, organize and follow information in a constant and permanent way.

As a last detail of these findings, an important part was to question the use of hashtags by context, this refers to knowing where these hashtags are most frequently used not only in platforms but also in territories. Also, as the study progressed, a point that became relevant was to know if there were statistics or the movements of the most popular hashtags. To know this data, it was necessary to apply an API (Application Programming Interfaces) which is a type of software ecosystem (Manikas & Hansen, 2012) besides, Stylos and Mayer (2007) set out that an API "is a collection of existing code that other programmers can call to help accomplish programming tasks. Usually, the APIs are available only in compiled form, as an interface" (section what is an API? paragraph 1) therefore, the API that was applied was Brand 24 which helped to apply the statistics on the hashtag #langtwt.

This API applied a search range from 2021 to November 2023 and obtained results in categories such as numerical summary, context of the entries, popular mentions and trending hashtags that the API was able to detect in the entries it analyzed. As a missing factor, it was not possible to identify the places where the entries with the hashtags were most frequent, but a search in social networks did not find the popularity of the hashtag in Colombia; in general, they were mentions that came from countries such as the United States, Turkey, Germany and Canada.

Figure 11 shows the summary of mentions, which refers to the reach that this hashtag had, this API tracked the use of the hashtag (#langtwt) in three different social networks: TikTok, Instagram and X with 62 % of the posts having a positive character and with an estimated number of 162 posts carrying this hashtag. In the time range the API (Figure 12) obtained that 1191 interactions were registered with #langtwt and that it reached around 507 thousand people. Also in Figure 13, the API was able to list more hashtags that users used in relation to #langtwt and second language topics.

Fig. 11 *Summary of mentions.*

Fig. 12 *Numerical summary*

Fig. 13 *Popular hashtags*

Discussion

In this study, the focus on second languages was the basis for analyzing the linguistic practices that arise from the new contexts and spaces that users have transformed in the digital landscape. Thus, hashtags emerge as a practical element in relation to the new literacies that bring a perspective to the practices that have been developed to contribute to new learning and interaction. Hashtags have proven to have important functions to increase communication, participation and follow up of a target language. In addition, this project is carried out from the analysis and experience that led to evaluate qualitative and quantitative data. Also, what was presented was intended to contribute to the theoretical and applied structure in relation to linguistic practices in order to visualize, know and understand a little deeper perspective on this practice of digital literacy. Although hashtags are not new, they are still confused and undervalued. Therefore, recognizing the functionalities of this instrument that guides and maintains communication in another space that has relevance, the digital one.

The results obtained in this research work contribute to the previous research that exists in the field of hashtags. Represent the theoretical ideas of the academics consulted. Therefore, the argument of Zappavigna's ideas and his in-depth study on the use of hashtags and the creation of environments that can be generated from this interface unit. Also, Mora (2014) and Lankshear and Knobel (2006) in representing the changes and perceptions of literacy and changes in language practices. Also, different ideas from the literature that were consulted were important for the exploration of hashtags, in general, the findings of this work are not only evidence of a practice, but it contributes to this phenomenon of new practices, to the discourse of the digital dimension and the role in the daily functions of the users and adds value traces to literacy.

Now, a perceived finding about hashtags refers to linguistics. On platform X, the use of words and not phrases were evident. This is because on Instagram, in addition to keywords, they are longer phrases. Therefore, users on X and other platforms created keywords and words for the hashtag, which creates variants of hashtags within a platform. Although each platform has a different structure and functions, they share a section for hashtags, each has its own hashtag search engine, but there is still no good use of this function.

Hashtag management by the users is very high, but there are still no hashtags that lead or have a popularity to the point of being a trend for the reaches or entries under a special hashtag, although there is one: #langtwt, by the transition to other platforms is not used in the same way as in X then we can talk about another term, the pragmatics. The hashtag has not only computational functions, but also linguistic and pragmatic ones. With the above, the results of this study complement the transforming function of the hashtag for the processes of autonomous learning, for the monitoring of the process of the practice of a second language and the hashtag is accepted as an element of practice of the new literacies that promotes communication, interaction, adaptation, participation and monitoring of linguistic dynamics in the digital ambient, especially in social networks.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author used Grammarly for checking the spelling in long sentences. In addition, ChatGPT allowed the author to examine the academic style in paragraph and look over the coherence and cohesion with long sentences. During the entire process, the content was reviewed and edited as needed and the author takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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