Spanish/Castilian on Wikipedia: voices and discussion forum

Español/castellano en Wikipedia: voces y foro de discusión

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Abstract:

 In this research we carried out a study with quantitative and qualitative methodology of two encyclopedia entries and their respective talk pages in the Spanish version of Wikipedia. The two articles that were monitored and analyse are "Spanish language" and "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language", whose analysis has allowed us to demonstrate the collaborative working mode of the online encyclopedia as well as to study the discussion forums that are generated in the construction of these entries. In this way, we analyse some of the aspects of typical user behaviour on virtual forums and the (im)politeness strategies used most frequently in the discussions that the encyclopedia itself promotes for its own development. Our results show how Spanish Wikipedia is a working environment that strives to keep progressing in its aim to produce rigorous and effective results, by providing an endogenous structure that acts as a filter/manager of content and ways of expression. We will also verify how discussions about the construction of these entries show elements of impoliteness occurring in interactions between users and editors, which denotes an attitude that is at variance with the rules of behaviour specified by the digital encyclopedia (the so-called "five pillars" of Wikipedia).

Keywords:

Wikipedia; Spanish; collaborative work; discussion; (im)politeness.

Resumen:

En esta investigación hemos realizado un estudio, con metodología cuantitativa y cualitativa, de dos voces enciclopédicas y sus respectivas discusiones en la versión en español de Wikipedia. Los dos artículos monitorizados y analizados han sido "idioma español" y "controversia por el nombre del idioma español", cuyo análisis nos ha permitido mostrar el modo de trabajo colaborativo de la enciclopedia online y el estudio de los foros de discusión que se generan en la construcción de estas entradas. Por ello, hemos analizado algunos aspectos de comportamiento propios de los foros virtuales y las estrategias de (des)cortesía más recurrentes en las discusiones que propicia la propia enciclopedia para su construcción. Los resultados muestran cómo Wikipedia en español es un entorno de trabajo que pretende seguir avanzando en la obtención de productos rigurosos y eficaces, arbitrando para ello una estructura endógena que actúe a modo de filtro/gestor de contenidos y formas de expresión. Hemos comprobado también cómo en la discusión sobre la construcción de estas voces se emplean estrategias de descortesía entre los usuarios y los editores, lo que denota una actitud que se desmarca de las normas de comportamiento de esta enciclopedia digital (los llamados "cinco pilares" de Wikipedia).

Palabras clave:

Wikipedia; Español; trabajo colaborativo; discusión; (des)cortesía.

1. Introduction

From its foundation to date, the digital impact of Wikipedia has been extraordinary, a true example of the use of Big Data (Mayer-Schönberger y Cukier, 2013). Of all similar online resources, this online encyclopedia boasts the most entries, but above all, it is the most consulted, sees the highest levels of activity and has the greatest number of contributors (Tramullas, 2015, Alexa, 2020). In fact, in March 2020, there were as many as 25,322,788,288 visits recorded to some Wikipedia pages (Wikistats).

Moreover, Wikipedia is a model example of collaborative working, what is termed *collective intelligence* (Kubátová, 2012). This collaborative behavior is precisely what we will attempt to demonstrate in this investigation through the use of a case study focusing on the analysis of two articles from the encyclopedia: "*idioma español*" "Spanish language" and "*controversia por el nombre del idioma español*" "Controversy surrounding the name of the Spanish language". The analysis of these two encyclopedia entries will allow us to shed light on the editorial policies regarding Wikipedia articles in the encyclopedia's Spanish version.

The first version of the online encyclopedia, in English, was put together by Larry Sanger and Jimmy Wales on 15th January 2001 and took its inspiration from the Nupedia project (Timothy, 2005), a trial version which had much smaller scope owing to the fact that was not based on collaborative creation, termed *wiki*. Since this point, the birth and exponential growth of

other language versions has been without match. Indeed, the Spanish version was launched only months later, 20th May of the same year. The entry entitled "Spanish language", which gave rise to the corresponding article, was generated –in the Spanish edition– on 15th January 2002, that is, one year after the general inauguration of the encyclopedia. This fact reveals the importance of the interest that has been aroused, since the article's creation, in everything related to the language (and its variants) and which unites the Spanish speaking community.

Since its creation, the article "Spanish language" has generated much debate (talk, in Wikipedia terms) concerning all manner of topics related to the language and its variants, including, its alternative names: *español* 'Spanish' versus *castellano* 'Castilian'. Discussion concerning what the language should be called was so intense that it spurred the production of a second article entitled: "Controversy about the name of the Spanish language", which shows how much the encyclopedia's construction is indeed a collaborative project for all Spanish speaking communities. Although the encyclopedia is not endorsed by any language academy or other academic institution (this would be forbidden by its own policies) and is constructed through the disinterested collaboration of Wikipedians from all regions of the globe, Wikipedia's Spanish version has acquired such relevance that the Cervantes Institute's annual report on the state of Spanish in the world contains a section dedicated to it (Instituto Cervantes, 2019: 64).

These issues aside, we are interested in deepening our understanding of how Wikipedia functions in reality and, particularly, in a pragmalinguistic analysis of the controversies that fuel the construction of knowledge in the Spanish version of this online encyclopedia. These controversies arise directly from the nature of subject at the center of debate and quantitative analysis shows that, for versions of the encyclopedia in certain languages such as Spanish (which encompasses diatopic varieties in Spain and the Americas), articles provoke high levels of dispute because of decentralized character of the encyclopedia. According to data released by the Cervantes Institute (2019:5), "almost 483 million people have Spanish as their mother tongue. In turn, the group of potential users of Spanish in the world (a figure which includes speakers with Native Competence, Limited Competence and Foreign Language Learners) exceeds 580 million". This is, then, the second most important community of native speakers on Wikipedia and, what is more, the Spanish version of Wikipedia is one of the most international in terms of content creation and the decentralization of this version has increased over the last decade. In 2013, it was found that 83.4% of the German version of Wikipedia was produced in Germany; in the French version of Wikipedia, 80.1% of content came from France; in the Italian version, 95% originated in Italy. With respect to the Spanish version, only 32.2% of content was generated in Spain, 14.1% in Argentina and 12.6% in Mexico; in other words, the three countries that contributed the most to Spanish Wikipedia are responsible for only 58.8% of its content (Wikistats, 2013).[1] Thus, it can be seen that this is a version without a single pole –or country– of origin. This fact may underlie the inequality seen in the application of editorial criteria with respect to content in different diatopic varieties, no doubt an instigating element in the emergence of numerous strands of debate.

The concept of decentralization to which we have referred can be appreciated through analysis of the two entries studied in this work: "Spanish language" and "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language". The debate generated amongst

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[1] To clarify, these data are dated in 2013 and the only edits considered are by non-registered users, i.e., IP editors. Although we are aware of the vagueness of this information, it does, in fact, help us to confirm that the Spanish language version is very clearly decentralised with respect to other versions.

Wikipedians by these articles allows us to illustrate how this *online* encyclopedia enables the collaborative construction of knowledge. In addition, we will analyze the most common (im)politeness strategies used in the discussions surrounding these two articles. It is widely known that every article has a section, or space, for "talk" where users/editors lay out their points for debate and in that way come to the compromises necessary to develop each entry. Although it is made clear explicitly that these "talk" spaces are not intended to be forums for polemic, user behavior here is similar, in many aspects, to that seen on the discussion forums common on social networks

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. *Characterization of the Spanish version of Wikipedia*

While Wikipedia is defined as one encyclopedia, it is, in reality, the sum of 309 different language versions –although a handful of these are in the process of "incubation" due to their low activity levels–. Each one of these editions is distinct and, although they are all produced with the same objective in terms of reliability (Anexo: Wikipedias, 2020) and are governed by the same rules, the "five pillars of Wikipedia" (Los cinco pilares, 2020), they follow different working practices and habits in their creation. In this way, it is interesting to note that Wikipedia is not edited in the same way as a traditional encyclopedia written in one language and later translated into others, rather, the 309 versions are distinct (although they may include translations or many similar articles). National versions of Wikipedia do not exist, rather, linguistic versions (and, in some cases, dialect versions). For example, Spanish Wikipedia is a common edition for all Spanish speaking countries and all the users of this language and its variants. Whether they live in a Spanish speaking country or not, these users can not only consult it but also edit Spanish Wikipedia –so long as the web site is available bearing in mind that in certain countries, such as China, it is not legal (BBC, 2019)–. Also, some countries have their own online encyclopedias, but these are separate projects unconnected to Wikipedia: as an example, Cuba has *EcuRed* and in Spain we find the *la Enciclopedia Libre Universal* (Tkacz, 2011). All the different language versions of Wikipedia come under the umbrella of the wider digital frame of Wikimedia, which fosters additional sister projects: worldwide archives of photography; videos; sound; and other digital media. There is an immense plurality of digital content (Wikimedia Foundation, 2020).

Comparing the different language versions, Wikipedia in Spanish comes ninth in terms of the number of entries included: more than 1,600,000, but second in the world in terms of user numbers, measured as the number of internauts that have engaged in some activity within its digital environment over the last 30 days (List of Wikipedias by speakers per article 2018 and Wikistats 2020). This clear disparity between the number of entries and the number of users seems to indicate that the Spanish speaking community, although active in terms of consultation, is far more reticent when it comes content creation (Claes y Deltell, 2019).

Whatever the case, despite the divergence between different versions of the encyclopedia referred to here, there is, in all cases, a common concern for maintaining order and the collaborative creation of a product under decentralized conditions, where this is understood as the absence of hierarchical structures and centralized organizational mechanisms, or conflict-resolution procedures based on authority. Nevertheless, in the absence of such structures, mechanisms, and

procedures, Wikipedia's policies enable conflict resolution to be handled by participants themselves. This is an example of how order arises endogenously online (Lerner and Lomi, 2020). During the first few years after its creation the reliability and rigor of Wikipedia was indeed a matter of debate (Wedemeyer et al., 2008; Giles, 2005) and a certain skepticism continues to this day. However, the literature has begun to recognize the quality of certain, more established versions such as the English and the German Wikipedias (Hube, 2017).

2.1.1. Structure and workings of Wikipedia

Despite the decentralization we have alluded to, every version of Wikipedia attempts to maintain a similar system of organization, one that is as well suited as possible to the online encyclopedia's original idiosyncratic style, prioritizing constant improvement of entries and always preserving the principle of free participation in the collaborative construction of knowledge. In order to analyze the (im)politeness strategies (see section 4.2) that appear in the discussions concerning Wikipedia articles it is appropriate to look first at the different roles adopted by the people who edit Wikipedia content, according to their experience and knowledge of its environment. In general terms the following categories can be identified:

A) Editors are users who generate content. Their intervention is either identified –by a username or *nickname*– or anonymous –they can only be recognized by their IP address.

B) If a user has made a specific number of editions and has held an account for a particular length of time, they become what is known as an *autoconfirmed* user –an option not available as an IP editor– which allows them to edit protected articles, that is, those which, having been the focus of repeated "vandalism", can only be edited by more advanced users. The requirements for becoming an autoconfirmed users vary according to Wikipedia language version: for example, in Spanish more than 50 edits are required and their account must be at least 4 days old (Autoconfirmados, 2020).

C) Administrators are a category whose rank allows them to engage in high level administration and control tasks. In Spanish Wikipedia, as explained by Patricio Lorente (2020:82), there are 70 active administrators across the world, which not very many considering the number of active editors in Spanish. Administrators often intervene to defuse conflict, resolve problems that are beyond the capabilities of editors and, above all, they undertake tasks that other users do not have the permissions for such as page deletion or protection. If an article has been repeatedly "vandalized" –subject to editing that is either malicious or repeatedly violates editing rules– it can be protected and certain editors can be blocked if they behave in ways that are contrary to the interests of the community.

The *wiki* interface enables the contributions of all user categories to be seen. This facilitates traceability, that is, tracking the changes involved in a page's construction. Both readers and editors of Wikipedia can access all this information in the revision history: how articles were constructed, who participated in various tasks and the pageview statistics.

They can also look at the contents edited by each user (user contributions) or the discussion processes that occurred to achieve consensus on page content (user talk).

It is important to highlight that Wikipedia possesses an internal structure that, while not widely known, is available for investigation by any curious internaut:

— User pages: where those who have registered accounts can write about their interests and present themselves to the rest of the community.

— User talk pages: where direct, public messages can be left for other users. These work in a similar way to the article discussion pages and anyone can join in on these spaces.

— Café: a zone for the exchange of ideas, proposals, and consultation about the Wikipedia project. Users can ask about technical issues, ask for help from more seasoned users, propose topics for community discussion, amongst other things.

Also found as part of the Café interface and accessible from its homepage we find the:

— Requests for administrator attention: This space is a superior forum for problem resolution. Here, help can be sought from administrators to settle all manner of conflicts. Mostly, this concerns edit wars, warnings about bad behavior on the part of certain users, or the repeated sabotaging of articles, requests for deleted articles to be reinstated and much more. When a dispute is sufficiently intractable that it cannot be handled within the virtual environment, it may be escalated as a petition to Meta Wikimedia as is occurring currently with regards to the Croatian language version of Wikipedia, where a majority of editors have formed a nucleus with far right tendencies that bars from the project any editor attempting to present an alternative view point with regards to the presentation of information (Lorente, 2020: 81).

Although there are many studies and investigations on Wikipedia in other languages, especially English, in Spanish there is often a certain lack of precision concerning basic terms and concepts. Nevertheless, we consider it of interest to make reference to these in order to demonstrate that, even in the absence of centralization, the encyclopedia is becoming ever more hierarchical in its ways of working and it employs the necessary mechanisms (using filters) to enable the production of content, governed, as ever, by the ideal of achieving rigor and reliability. To this end, and by way of summary, we include a glossary of the fundamental terms and subjects connected with the Spanish version of this online encyclopedia (Table 1).

Table 1. Current vocabulary used by Spanish Wikipedia editors with definitions

Term	Definition
Usuario anónimo o usuario IP (Unregistered: IP or not logged in)	A person who edits Wikipedia pages without having an account and a username. Generally, these users are termed IP editors.
Usuario o editor (Registered user)	A person who has an account and username (*nickname*) who edits pages on the platform.
Usuario autoconfirmado (Autoconfirmed user)	An editor who has made more than 50 edits and has an account that is at least 4 days old. They can edit certain protected articles.
Verificador (Reviewer)	An editor who has asked the community for permission to validate new articles.
Bibliotecario (Administrator)	An editor who is trusted by the community to protect, delete, restore articles; block certain users who behave inappropriately; and to complete tasks that other users are not permitted to.

Vigilante (Watcher)	Any editor who has selected to follow an article or page on Wikipedia. Every time a modification is made, however small, they will receive a notification. In general, a page's watchers include those editors who have invested considerable time in its creation or in its improvement, or those people who are interested in controlling changes.
Bloqueo (Blocking)	The action of preventing a user from continuing to edit. This can apply to one article in particular, or the encyclopedia as a whole. It may be temporary or permanent.
Guerra de edición (Edit war*)*	When an editor systematically and without due respect to the policies and conventions of Wikipedia overwrites and/or undoes an edit by another user and vice-versa. There may or may not have been previous discussion on the talk page, and it must be referred to the Administrator's Board for resolution.
Tablón de bibliotecarios (Administrator's Board)	A zone designed to host petitions to the administrators of the encyclopedia.
Café (Village pump)	A space for general discussion and the open exchange of ideas, information, consultation, technical advice, polls, proposals for improving the community, etc. It is organized according to topics of interest.
Políticas y convenciones (Policies and guidelines)	The rules concerning participation on Wikipedia that are agreed upon by community consensus. Their basis is the "Five Pillars" which encompass themes such as the "neutral point of view", what breaking the rules might imply, civility, deletion policies, etc.
Edición (Editing)	The action of modifying any content on Wikipedia.
Deshacer (Undo)	Undoing the edits of another user (going back one step). This action is very easy, since *wikis* have an "undo" button against edits in the revision history of each article. It is very useful in the case of undesirable user behaviors and a dangerous weapon in edit wars.
Artículo (Article)	The principal environment where all the content and definitions for every entry are present.
Página de discusión del artículo (Talk page)	An environment associated with a particular article where editors seek consensus about the content, they wish to be included in the principle area of said article. It is a space where debates take place with the objective of improving the content of an article.
Artículo semi protegido (Semi-protected article)	An article that can be edited only by autoconfirmed users, since it contains themes that provoke conflict and recurring vandalism. This protection can be requested by any user and is implemented by an administrator. If the conflicts are significant, an article can be protected completely such that it can only be edited by administrators.
Página de usuario (User page)	A page where editors can present themselves to the community in terms of their interests, specialisms and editing preferences. It is not considered appropriate to give personal information.
Página de discusión de usuario (User talk page)	A space associated with a user page where editors can leave messages for the user in question.

Source: author's own interpretation based on information gathered from Wikipedia

2.2. Discussion or debate forum

The structure of the encyclopedia, referred to in Table 1 (section 2.1), highlights how discussion or debating forums are a fundamental pillar supporting the different voices (users, editors and administrators) involved in constructing Wikipedia. For this reason, amongst the previously mentioned "five pillars", upon which all Wikipedia's policies are based, we find one that refers to the way in which discussions should be held: seeking a "neutral point of view" (Los cinco pilares, 2020) which promotes the presentation of information in the least biased fashion, taking into account different points of view without giving primacy to opinions that are merely personal, stating explicitly that users should not "present one point of view as true or better". However, this is difficult to achieve in discussions (Páginas de discusión, 2020), especially where debate concerns those articles which inspire the highest levels of controversy. Something that, in fact, is a source of recrimination amongst users:

(1) Hello user: 186.56.197.62. Wikipedia is not about showing things the way someone believes they ought to be but rather telling what the references say they are. If you think that "Castilian" is old fashioned, conservative or Castille-centered, this is of no importance to the article because it is not based on your opinions nor mine […] Regards. Lin linao¿dime? 14:24 8 mar 2016 (UTC) (Discussion: idioma español, 2020).

Wikipedia is not only an open-source encyclopedia, constructed through the participation of users who create articles, but also an environment within which to discuss those same encyclopedia entries and even, where necessary, modify them, reject and withdraw them.

In this sense, (dis)agreement naturally forms part of the dynamic established in these so called "discussions", whose aim is "the communication between project contributors with the objective of addressing issues related to any theme about the encyclopedia". Although the policies of Wikipedia insist that discussion pages are not social spaces and, above all, not forums for opinion, this good practice is not always followed. As a result, it is relatively common to find personal opinions and biased evaluations.

Within the Wikipedia environment there is a strong insistence on distinguishing discussion pages from discussion forums, that is, defining them as "spaces where readers are invited to discuss or share information" (Pano Alamán, 2008: 29).

(2) Hello. Wikipedia is not a forum. Discussion pages are not there to share opinions on the topic ("I think art is good". "Julius Caesar should not have trusted Brutus"), but to talk about the changes that are needed in an article ("this reference might work for cave art", "there are some spelling mistakes in the roman name for Brutus"). That's why, your opinion about the name of the language is fine for other types of site, while on this page we are concerned with what is now: "Spanish" or "Castellano". Regards. Lin linao¿dime? 00:44:15 ago 2016 (UTC) (Discussion: idioma español, 2020).

In fact, although prolonged personal conversations are discouraged on Wikipedia, a certain amount of private conversation is permitted. Thus, the main effort is aimed at separating these contributor discussions from those occurring on opinion forums where "the view expressed is not, in the beginning, directed at a particular topic and its text, it is "uploaded", unfiltered, to the web as soon as it is posted." (Vigara Tauste and Hernández Toribio, 2011: 355) Instead, conversations on Wikipedia attempt –often without success– to be more like forums where dialogue is directed by a purpose or theme, and that have some form of moderation with respect to content and theme (filters); in other words, those forums that

behave more like web-pages set up to "read, write or comment on messages about a specific topic" (Cassany, 2012: 210). They aim to take advantage of the nature of asynchronous specialized discussion forums, on which the expectation is that contributions should be reflective and foster critical thought (Eligio Mendoza et al., 2016: 100). However, just as on these, there is plenty of hostility, divergence of opinion, and competition between article editors. Wikipedia discussions follow similar patterns to those occurring on debate forums where "the discursive phenomena observed are more closely related to polemic interchange than the search for consensus (Gouti, 2006)" (Pano Alamán, 2008: 35).

Whatever the case, it is abundantly clear that there is a high level of conflict in discussions about articles, which can even escalate into what have been termed *guerras de edición* 'edit wars'. As we shall see, the Spanish version of Wikipedia is not exempt from this issue. Although the term "collaboration" may be used, given that many people are jointly participating in the production of knowledge, it seems that it is often less a case of collaboration, and more one of competition. In fact, many interventions are limited to modifying or removing the contributions of other authors (Collier and Bear, 2012: 385). As a direct result of this situation, in the context studied, the bitter defense of a point of view gives rise to a diversity of (im) politeness strategies.

3. Methodology, objectives, and corpus for analysis

In this study we attempt both quantitative and qualitative analyses of two articles and their associated discussions in the Spanish version of Wikipedia: "Spanish language" and "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language". We will address the collaborative nature of the online encyclopedia's construction and also analyze the discussion forums that are generated in the process.

Objectives

Ob.1.   To monitor activity on the two articles "Spanish language" and "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language" and their respective discussions.

Ob.2.   To quantify how the articles and discussions are evolve: according to size in terms of number of bytes, characters and words; the number of visits recorded to each page within the last 60 days, the number of edits made and the number of editors (identified, anonymous or IP and *bots*).

Ob.3.   To detail content creation and watching activity on the two articles: in terms of the number of watchers, the number of editors and the volume of content creation by the ten most active users. To investigate whether this concerns an *autoridad libre* 'free authority' (Claes and Deltell, 2020) monopolistic discourse.

Ob.4.   To analyze the apparent quality of entries, measured as a function of certain parameters such as references: unambiguous references, academic or scientific references, as well as the curation of the articles in terms of the number of sections and other resources.

Ob.5.   To make a qualitative analysis of (im)politeness strategies appearing on the discussion pages associated with the two articles upon which this work focuses.

In this study, we propose three working hypotheses:

H.1.   That the articles "Spanish language" and "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language" on Wikipedia translate the complexity and plurality of this language, as well as the debates surrounding it, into the digital environment.

H.2.   That "discussions" concerning both articles manifest as wide-ranging and pluralistic debating forums.

H.3.   That the construction of Spanish Wikipedia is achieved through consensus and without the existence of a monopolistic authority.

4. Discussion

4.1. Results and data analysis of the articles and associated discussions

Monitoring revealed that the two articles studied receive a significant volume of traffic and construction activity (Table 2). Although, as might be expected, it is the article "Spanish language" that achieves highest levels of participation and impact within the online community. In order to understand the impact of "Spanish language" it is interesting to note that this article is cited, or is made reference to in 47,951 different articles on Spanish Wikipedia, something that reflects the level of importance given to this article within this version of the encyclopedia.

The first significant piece of information is the size of the articles: that concerning the naming controversy contains 3,060 words (20,586 characters) while that concerning the language contains 10,322 (67,949 characters). The "Spanish language" article therefore is three times the size of the other article. It is also interesting to analyze article size in terms of bytes: the language article comprises 245,476 while that on the controversy has only 36,694. As can be observed, the article on the language is largest by a factor of seven; this is due to the fact that it uses more visual resources and images than the other article. The "Spanish language" article makes use of numerous maps to demonstrate how the language has expanded across the world and uses photographs and images of national flags to indicate those countries where the language is spoken. Naturally, all these resources imply a considerable increase in byte count.

However, the area where the article "Spanish language" stands out most is, without doubt, in terms of quality indices since it contains a high number of references within its text (520 in total), of which 76% are unambiguous (395); it also distinguishes itself by its huge number of watchers (546). It is, as a result, an article that is controlled and studied by an authentic community of users. More than half a million users take an interest and receive automatic alerts whenever the article undergoes a modification or change. In this way, the likelihood of substandard edits going uncorrected is very unlikely in the construction of this particular page. The article "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language" also rates highly in terms of its number of watchers (90) but, it is inferior in terms of the number of references cited: a mere 34 compared to the 520 of "Spanish language".

As indicated by Rodríguez-Mateos and Hernández-Pérez (2018), it is true that the number of references is important, but so is the quality of said references. Essentially, citing peer reviewed scientific literature would appear to be more rigorous than referring to literature in the general press or from non-scientific blogs. In the case of "Spanish language", the origins

of its references are disparate and although the majority are from official bodies such as foundations, language academies or the texts of national constitutions, there are also examples taken from the general press.

Table 2: information about editors and the size of articles analyzed

Article Name Size and characteristics	Controversy about the name of the Spanish language	Discussion about the article	Spanish language	Discussion about the article
Date of creation	1/3/07	2/3/07	15/1/02	21/9/03
Number of languages in which the article can be found	7	not applicable	268	not applicable
Number of words contained in the article	3,060	4,759	10,322	27,349
Number of characters	20,586	28,910	67,949	169,205
Size in *bytes*	36,694	48,700	245,476	441,707
Sections in the article	18	25	54	154
Links to the article	9	2	47,951	44
References	34	not applicable	520	not applicable
Unambiguous References	32	not applicable	395	not applicable
% unambiguous references	94%	not applicable	76%	not applicable
Editors				
Total number of article editors	338	104	3,612	596
-editors identified by username	139	57	1.156	290
- unidentified editors (IPs)	174	43	2,357	289
-bot editors	25	4	99	17
Edits				
Average number of edits per editor (general)	1.94	2.06	3.44	3.25
Average number of edits per *bot*	2.04	1.00	5.33	4.12
Average number of *bytes* added per editor (general)	108.56	144.08	726.26	1,306.83
Average number of *bytes* added per edit (general)	56.02	227.57	19.73	228.27
Most active users				

Number of edits made by the 10 most active editors (identified + *bots*)	134	77	3,117	568
Percentage of edits made by the 10 most active users out of all edits	20.46%	35.98%	25.05%	29.35%
Number of watchers	90	90	546	546
Percentage of watchers compared to editors (general)	3.76%	1.16%	6.62%	1.09%
Protection against novice editors or IPs	no	no	no	no
Number of visits to the page				
Over the last year	63,509	127	1,328,800	1,904
Over the last 60 days	22,557	34	235,096	238

Source: compiled by the author using ToolForge

When analyzing a Wikipedia article, it is important to understand the how it has been constructed. The page, "Spanish language" has been produced by 3,612 users over 17 years. Of these users, 1,156 were editors identifiable by usernames, while 2,357 were anonymous users or unidentified editors (IPs). As can be seen, this adds up to an immense amount of activity. The article has also been improved automatically by 99 *bots*, that have corrected minor issues (errata or formatting).

We found that each editor who has worked on the article made, on average 3.44 edits which constitutes a mean number of additions equivalent to 726.26 bytes. These data are purely statistical, involving arithmetic means, and do not therefore give a true reflection of the plurality of the article's voice. Instead, in order to measure the impact made by an article's creation it is best to evaluate the weight of the ten editors who have contributed most to the article in question. In the case of the article "Spanish language", the participation of the most active editors only accounts for 25.05% of the article's total content; this is because we are dealing with an article that has been created pluralistically and without any monopolizing control. The data on "Controversy" are similar although they do not reach the same levels as those recorded for the "Spanish language".

A piece of data of great importance concerns the fact that the discussion pages associated with both articles studied are significant in terms of size (measured in *bytes*) and the participation of numerous voices, indeed, there are even more sections in the discussions than in the articles themselves. This appears to confirm that debate surrounding the Spanish language is one of the most important topics in Spanish Wikipedia.

In this way, quantitative analysis corroborates our initial hypothesis. The volume of activity surrounding the construction of the pages we have selected clearly demonstrates the collaborative nature of work on the encyclopedia.

Regarding quantitative analysis of the size of the articles studied, the indices of "apparent quality" (high number of in-text references, but above all, the quality of these references) and the volume of users involved are all important elements

allowing us to illustrate not only the collaborative process of constructing the encyclopedia but also its way of dealing with the complexity and the plurality of the Spanish language.

4.2. Results and analysis: (im)politeness

As we were able to show from the quantitative analysis described in previous questions, discussions form an essential part of the dynamic imposed by Wikipedia for the collaborative construction of knowledge, aimed at the encyclopedia's continuous improvement.

Besides Wikipedia's preoccupation with the use of references and other elements that enhance its quality, there is a parallel concern about its good functioning. As we pointed out in section 2.2., discussions surrounding the articles selected resemble those seen on opinion forums, in that they have a purpose-theme around which debate is centered, and, like these forums, have an internal structure which attempts to implement certain mechanisms that assure orderly management of content and forms of expression– a feature that Wikipedia itself is ever more assiduous in promoting. On the discussion pages themselves, there is continuous reiteration of the expectation of civil behavior –and many users issue reminders too– when suggesting or advising changes to an article, communicating errors to other users or adding information. It is clear, however, that these directives are not always followed since while there are many user interventions in which agreement, expressed either directly or indirectly, does prevail there are also those in which disagreement, total or partial, is shown and manifests in ways that may be impolite or not.

As indicated by Brenes Peña (2011: 11), the current culture is given to criticism and, "disagreement, confrontation and dispute have become, for various reasons, very frequently used forms of interaction". Nevertheless, even where disagreement can be expressed politely, more often than not, it is formulated impolitely.

In section 4.2.1. we will examine the nature of these discussions. We will focus our interest on illustrating some of the (im) politeness strategies employed.

4.2.1. Affiliation and agreement

Despite the fact that the dynamic of the encyclopedia itself not only lends itself uniquely to interventions that allow for the correction of, that is to say, rejection of a piece of information, but also its ratification, finding in favor of one or another user, manifestations exclusively showing agreement do not usually form the majority of expressions in discussions. When agreement does appear, it may do so explicitly, in a direct fashion, through the use of a performative verb (I agree, I am in accord).

> (3) I agree totally with Cipión's comment, I live in Catalonia and I detect a growing use of the phenomenon he reports. It's a good observation, perhaps we should look for a citation to a source that might capture the fact to give references for the phenomenon Davius. 10:55 3 mar 2007 (CET) (Discussion: "*Controversia por el nombre del idioma español*", 2020).

What is more, as we are dealing with controversies, where the only purpose of agreement is affiliation, it is often the case that it appears in an intensified form, as in the unqualified agreement which occurs in example (3), through the use of the adverb *totalmente* 'totally'. In this example the move of agreeing is further reinforced by the expressive act of giving an

evaluative compliment (*es una buena observación* 'it's a good observation'), whose primary function is more affective and social than referential. This is an act that integrates rather than distances (Jaworski, 1995: 63), and since it is a strategy that favors the affiliative face of the receiver as much as the emissor it enables the creation of a cordial atmosphere.

Agreement also appears in indirect formats, as in (4). Here, one user adds information to corroborate the opinion of another user so positioning themselves on their side of the argument:

(4) Pan Hispanic Dictionary of Doubts 2005

I think this resolves the controversy:

Spanish. To designate the common language of Spain and many nations of the Americas, and that is also spoken as the official language in many other parts of the world, the terms that are valid [...].(Discussion: "Controversia por el nombre del idioma español", 2020).

Given the many variables in play, such as the objective of the discussion and the user's need to demonstrate their credentials as a learned authority on the subject they are talking about, justifications are common and are filled with exemplifications, references, arguments with regards to authority, analogies, amongst other moves. In opinions displaying agreement, a common justification move involves the user attempting to demonstrate that they possess sufficient discretion both to make positive evaluations as well as in judging and criticizing (as in the case of dissenting acts). In this sense, the user is reinforcing their own face –engaging in self-facework activities (Hernández Flores, 2013)– as a person who is competent and trustworthy, and who can make relevant contributions.

As in example (3), justifications may be made through a first-person account (*yo vivo* 'I live') of a lived experience, that attempts to bestow a certain authority on the speaker's opinion. Wikipedia tends to frown upon the use of such value judgements, however, in the case of (3), rather than being an opinion that is exclusively personal the user's justification predominantly acts to give authority to their argument. It is assumed that any lived experience will lend greater credibility to an argument. In (4), the inclusion of the in-text citation to the entry for "*español* 'Spanish'" in *Diccionario Panhispánico de Dudas* is another example of a user aiming to give authority to their argument since the dictionary referred to is one produced by the greatest authority of all with regards to the Spanish language, the RAE.

4.2.2. Disagreement and (im)politeness

Compared to instances of agreement, those of disagreement with an opinion given by another user in a discussion are in fact more common. Here we are dealing with dissenting acts, that is, those that "reject the truth or validity of the propositional content affirmed by the other interlocutor or, in other words, center on challenging the information that has been or is being uttered by the other participant in the conversation" (Brenes Peña, 2011: 32).[2]

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2   Through contesting or disagreeing (negative formulae, first-person metacommunicative formulae, exploratory or hypothetical interrogations); objection or opposition (discursive markers, counterarguments, interrogation with argumentative aims); concession (accepting with opposition, concessive distancing connectors); correction; justification (Brenes Peña, 2011: 56).

(5) It is known and used more as Spanish

I am not in agreement with renaming the page as Castilian because it is not the most used word, but there is nothing denigrating about the word above all when many countries say Castilian without any problem […]JaimeDes 15:27 4 jan 2016 (UCT) (Discussion: "idioma español", 2020).

Often, as in (5), disagreement is seen in the form of a first-person metacommunicative strategy (*no estoy de acuerdo* 'I am not in agreement', with both negation and the appearance of a performative verb. Other formulae observed include use of the verbs believe (*no creo* 'I don't believe') or to differ (*discrepo,* 'I differ'), negative evaluations of another's opinion (*tu opinión no me convence* 'your opinion does not convince me'), or simple negation (*no* 'no').

Differences of opinion can be expressed without impoliteness, which is exactly what the encyclopedia attempts to promote. In fact, in opinions such as those voiced in example (5), the person offering the opinion will usually frame their disagreement in an attenuated form as a way of protecting their own self-image (as an equable, tolerant person who weighs their opinions carefully) and as a politeness strategy directed at the other user (respectful of other's interventions). Thus, as an attenuation strategy, the user in example (5) justifies their stance by saying: "*no es la palabra de mayor uso* 'it is not the most used word'" (referring to the term *castellano* 'Castilian'), and also makes an attenuating concession introduced by *pero* 'but': "*pero no tiene nada de denigrante la palabra sobre todo cuando muchos países dicen castellano sin ningún problema* 'but there is nothing denigrating about the word above all when many countries say Castilian without any problem'".

As affiliation strategies, in interventions containing agreement as much as those showing disagreement, users sometimes resort to conventional formulae for opening and closing conversations such as *saludos* 'greetings'. This feature shows how, despite their asynchronous nature, these discussions behave like forums where turn taking alternates between speakers. We also see other expressives such as thanks. All these are acts of fostering social harmony, whose objective is the establishment and maintenance of a polite environment (Leech, 1983: 104). Specifically, thanking is a reactive act that speakers engage in depending on the prior actions of the hearer (Searle, 1969: 67) and has an important social function (Norrick, 1978: 285; Eisenstein and Bochman, 1996: 64). It enables speakers to establish a cordial atmosphere, contributes to the harmonious development of social relationships between members of the community, re-establishes the cost-benefit equilibrium between the speaker and hearer, and reinforces the positive face of the speaker (Haverkate, 1994: 82, 93). In this way, the recurrence of this most formulaic of speech acts, is very much in accord with the policies of the encyclopedia, which, in ever greater measure, attempt to instill cordiality between users faced with the acrimonious tone developed in certain discussions.

(6) Not without references. Thank you for your message, but for us to be able to include the information you are offering us, it is necessary that you supply trustworthy references to back it up, these can be books, web pages, newspapers, magazines, etc. You can consult Wikipedia: Verifiability for more information on the subject. Geom. 00:27 15 nov 2019 (UTC) (Discussion: Idioma español , 2020).

On the other hand, difference is expressed in more than a few cases –more than desirable, given the encyclopedia's ever increasing insistence, on the necessity to maintain its stated policies– by showing not only disagreement, but expressing it

in an openly impolite manner. In this way, we see the same types of impoliteness formulae as seen in other interactions.[3] For example, disqualifying the words of another (*es absurdo* 'that's absurd', *falso* 'false', *una tontería* 'stupid'…)

(7) Hello, I read in this article that. in parts of Mexico they use the voseo, this is a big lie […] jmko

08:02 07 mar 2009 (UTC) (Discussion: Idioma español, 2020).

(8) In order not to increase the list's length since it has gotten beyond ridiculous

05:44 15 jul 2019 (UTC) (Discussion: Idioma español, 2020).

When the tone of the intervention by a particular user is deliberately impolite or simply does not demonstrate the proper concern for polite behavior, we see the use of intensification mechanisms. In example (7), it would have been sufficient to use the word *mentira* 'lie' to disqualify the words of the other user, but instead, we see the word being emphasized by the adjective *grande* 'big'. We sometimes see this intensification achieved by means of ortho-typographic resources such as the use of small caps or upper-case lettering (*Eso es FALSO, completamente* 'That is completely FALSE'). Such cases are examples of the transcription of prosodic devices such as an emphatic, or insistent, tone of voice. This is, to some extent, similar to what we see occurring on social media opinion forums, where a certain degree of hybrid communication is also seen, where this is understood as the inclusion of certain features of spoken language within written text (Maíz-Arévalo and García-Gómez, 2013). Thus, we could consider these discussions as an interactive written dialogue (Ferrara, Brunner, and Whittemore, 1991: 8). As a matter of fact, however, as on social networking platforms (Twitter, Facebook…), these interactions are not instances of dialogue, that is, of a synchronous interchange between participants, but rather a collective discussion generated by the sum of all the voices speaking up about a particular issue (Mancera Rueda and Pano Alamán, 2013).

As we can show through our examples, what often happens is that the words of others are put on trial, perhaps through accusations of lying or "attacking their self-image, playing down or negating the value of the evidence produced" (Fuentes Rodríguez and Alcaide Lara, 2008: 24). To do this, users resort to irony (9), similes (9) or metaphors:

(9) Deficiencies in the article$_{Sup}$[4]
Very extensive, seems like a journal or a monograph (unsigned)
(Discussion: Idioma español, 2020).

Direct insults, a conventional impoliteness strategy (Culpeper, 2011: 135), are not common. In place of this strategy, we see disqualification being achieved through reference to the user in third person, "stripping them of their categorization as a participant in the discussion, turning them into a "thing" about which others talk" (Fuentes Rodríguez and Alcaide Lara, 2008: 24):

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3   See the taxonomies of impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper (2005), Fuentes Rodríguez y Alcaide Lara (2008) or Lorenzo-Dus, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich y Bou-Franch (2011).

4   Sup: superlative.

(10) Sincerely I don't see it as right that Wikipedians without any sense of objectivity with regards to Spanish should be those who impose the maps that they decide on at the time. On the map of the Spanish language the necessary references are missing […]. Adeuagur. 03:04 31 jul 2011 (UTC) (Discussion: Idioma español, 2020).

As occurs on social networking platforms, attacks are directed more at a group identity (the coalitions that are established between users) than that of individuals (García-Conejos Blitvich and Bou-Franch, 2019: 99).

Finally, we look at those cases where impoliteness is made clear through "the simple desire to boycott the intervention of the other (a turn is not claimed, but there is intervention), and demonstrate disconformity with what they are saying" (Fuentes Rodríguez and Alcaide Lara, 2008: 22). As we observe in the conversation shown in example (11), the users/content editors of Wikipedia reproach this behavior:

(11) Hello. The user Gonce insists on putting […] No doubt, the rioplatense "yeismo" is very interesting but this is not the place to mention it we talk about "yeismo" in 3 lines and it is not appropriate to enumerate every one of its usages. I won't keep undoing because it is clear that this won't stop without the participation of others. Thanks. Lin linao ¿dime?
00:19 11 jun 2009 (UTC)

(.) the user lin linao insists on removing my contribution about rioplatense "yeismo", it is relevant, it is only a small clarification and this user won't stop removing it. You can judge for yourselves the action to take and join the cause. Gonce.
00:30 11 jun 2009 (UTC).

Please, stop this attitude or it could be considered sabotage. Wikipedia is not the place to impose your personal preferences or your beliefs, as you say in your comment Lin linao […] Thanks for your understanding. -galio... ?
20:14 11 jun 2009 (UTC) (Discussion: Idioma español , 2020).

5. Conclusions

In this article we have presented a case study exemplifying the internal workings of Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia under continuous development and the fruit of collaborative work on the part of users. Specifically, in order to illustrate the activity on the Spanish version of Wikipedia, we have, through a qualitative analysis, inspected the behaviors and the processes involved in the construction of two representative articles in this linguistic version of the encyclopedia.

It was observed that the articles "Spanish language" and "Controversy over the name of the Spanish language" introduce heated and complex discussions to the Wikipedia environment reflecting the conflict provoked concerning topics connected with the language and its varieties. In this way, our first hypothesis (H1) appears to be confirmed: there are a significant number of editors (both anonymous and identifiable) who contribute pluralistically to the creation of the articles studied. Particularly relevant is the fact that both articles have a large number of watchers since this indicates the high level of interest and concern show within the community for the Spanish language.

With respect to hypothesis 2 (H2), the discussion pages for both articles studied appear to be wide-ranging and pluralistic debating forums that share many characteristics with specialist opinion forums, focused on a particular theme, and relying on a moderator to manage content and behavior; but which, despite the best efforts of Wikipedia to prevent it, also have features in common with other forums on which personal opinions are expressed. In either case, the strategies

of (im)politeness employed allowed us to determine the tone of these discussions and observe how consensus is sought in order to further the collaborative construction of knowledge which is the essence of Wikipedia.

Specifically, the construction of Spanish Wikipedia is marked by behaviors that foster consensus and that can encompass discussion, debate and even controversy. Most importantly, Spanish Wikipedia is not produced by a majority of users from any one country or community, rather it has a strong international flavor. In the same way, discourse is pluralistic not monopolistic; contributions from the ten most active editors on the two articles studied represent only a small part of the whole. As a result, hypothesis 3 (H3) seems to be confirmed, it appears that articles are produced without any monopolizing power or central authority to organize their construction.

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