

Spanish gender assignment in computer and Internet related loanwords

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Abstract

This study examines grammatical gender assignment to patent Anglicisms related to computers and the Internet in the Spanish language print and digital press. The data show that most such loanwords are consistently masculine due to factors that operate simultaneously in a non-contradictory fashion, such as non-typical phonological word shape, and synonymic and metonymic gender. A smaller number variably receive feminine and masculine gender due to hyperonymy, metonymic gender, and competing factors such as synonymic gender and phonological word shape. Only a handful are consistently feminine, almost exclusively due to synonymic gender, and rarely, metonymic gender. This study supports previous research findings that in Spanish masculine is the preferred gender in loanwords if there is no competing factor that would lead to feminine gender assignment. It also argues that semantic and phonological conditioning factors often work together in a non-contradictory way, competing only when each would assign a different gender.

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