

# Speech Framing Verbs in Spoken Language Complicate Crosslinguistic Findings

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**Keywords:** speech framing verbs; English; Spanish; quantitative corpus linguistics; comparative linguistics

Semantic variation in the domain of Speech Framing Verbs has mostly focused on their likeness to motion verbs, hypothesizing that (a) languages might differ in whether the speech act or the manner is lexicalized, leading to (b) differences in lexical richness. Martínez Vázquez (2005) concludes that the use of single verbs of saying with a manner element (i.e., *shriek*) is more frequent in English than in Spanish, where constructions combining two verbs (i.e., *decir estridentemente* 'say stridently') are preferred. On the other hand, Caballero & Paradis (2017) found that Spanish features much greater variety of verbs of saying with other meanings included, making use of more verbs of Activity, Perception, Cognition, and Emotion to frame speech.

Despite the diverse findings, what these studies share is their focus on literary data. Since (especially literary) written language is very different from spontaneous spoken language (O'Donnel, 1974; Tannen, 1982; Chafe & Tannen, 1987), making typological distinctions based on observations from literary corpora might not only misrepresent the variation, but also rule out large portions of the world's languages given that not all languages of the world have a rich literary tradition. Thus, in our mixed qualitative and quantitative study we look at speech framing verbs with a clausal direct object in English and Spanish (following as closely as possible the set-up in Caballero & Paradis 2017), using two corpora of spontaneous spoken language (Call-Home and Call-Friend) as comparable corpora to see if findings based on literary texts are replicated in the more basic genre of spontaneous spoken language.

The picture that emerges is, unsurprisingly, one of much less lexical variation for each language than in literary texts: basic speech framing verbs *say* and *tell* (English) and *decir* (Spanish) dominate the expressions to a much greater extent than in written language, thus confirming differences between the two genres (e.g., literary writing vs. spontaneous speech) as found in the abovementioned studies. In our talk, we explore whether other findings based on literary data hold (lexical variation, adverbial modification). Our preliminary findings show that some previously observed differences still seem to hold (e.g., the lexical richness being greater in Spanish than in English), whereas other are neutralized (e.g., the prevalence of manner adverbials is similarly low across the two languages). With a more modest set of reliable differences between the languages, we then inquire into further dimensions of functional differences between speech framing verbs in the two languages by exploring how tense, aspect, mood and modality, as well as the grammatical person and the presence of subjects and indirect objects modulate aspects of lexical richness. This inquiry leads to interesting modulations of some of the basic findings: for instance, while the differences in lexical richness between the languages seem to hold in the simple past tense (reflecting instances of narrative use), they are neutralized in the present tense (reflecting various usage or linguistic activity types, cf. Levinson 1979).

## References

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