

The most-retweeted French hashtag, *#jesuischarlie*, appeared after the attack on the satiric magazine *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters in Paris. It expressed support and alignment with the victims. Since then, the stem *#jesuis* has been extremely productive after other terrorist attacks (e.g. *#jesuisparis*), but also after other catastrophes (*#jesuisecuador*) and events evaluated as negative (*#jesuiscirconflexe*). Along with these authentic displays of alignment with “serious” causes, Twitter users have also expanded the use of *#jesuis* to make fun of “non-serious” causes. For instance an initially supportive hashtag, such as *#jesuischien* ‘Iamdog’ (concerning the death of a police-dog), evolved to humorous hashtags such as *#jesuiscafard* ‘Iamcockroach’ by choosing animals with a lower position on the animacy scale (Yamamoto 1999), relying on ‘graded salience’ for the humorous effect (Giora 1997). The stem *#jesuis* has then arguably acquired idiomatic meanings for expressing support or lack of it.

We will argue that this high productivity goes together with a process of fixation of the *#jesuis*-hashtags. This can be observed in the invariability of the stem (*#jesuis*, but rarely *#nous sommes*, for instance) and in its combination with numerous linguistic elements in the second slot, regardless of grammatical norms (*#jesuisfrite*) or language boundaries (*#jesuisbruselas*). Considering these observations, this paper will try to answer two questions: which elements fill the second slot of the hashtag with *#jesuis*? How do they relate to the language in which the tweet is written?

We base our analysis on a database of 1378 tweets from 2015-2016 containing *#jesuis* in various languages: approximately 300 tweets in Spanish, 300 in English, the rest is mostly in French and a much smaller representation of other languages, such as Dutch or Greek. To answer our questions, we will study the formal and semantic aspects of the *#jesuis* hashtags and their tweets. Within the hashtag, we will focus on the onomasiological variation (Grondelaers & Geeraerts 2003) in the second slot. In order to answer the second question, the hashtags and the tweets are being coded manually according to their language. The correlation between the two (language of the tweet-language of the hashtag) will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Our preliminary analyses show that *#jesuis* can be followed by a variety of linguistic elements, suggesting that this newly emerged construction (Bybee 2010; Croft 2007) has the associated meaning of expressing support or lack of it (as opposed to *je suis* as copular). Within the hashtags in French, we can find toponyms (e.g. *Bruxelles*), proper names (e.g. *Benzema*), common names with or without determiner (e.g. *poulet*, *unréfugiéclimatique*), adjectives (e.g. *con*), or more complex phrases (e.g. *anaretjassume*). Interestingly, the *#jesuis* construction also allows for combining with a variety of elements in other languages (e.g. *investigadoresdelaacademiadehumanidades* ‘researchersofthefacultyofhumanities’), suggesting that the meanings of *#jesuis* may be used cross-linguistically.

We expect the final results about the combinatorial possibilities in this construction to contribute to our analyses of the semantic and pragmatic facets of *#jesuis*-hashtags and to the more general understanding of their discursive functions.

References

Bybee, Joan. 2010. *Language, Usage, and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Croft, William 2007 Construction grammar. In Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens. (eds.), *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, 463-508. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Giora, Rachel. 1997. *Understanding figurative and literal language: The graded salience hypothesis*. In: *Cognitive Linguistics*, 8-3, 183-206.

Grondelaers, Stefan, and Dirk Geeraerts. 2003. "Towards a Pragmatic Model of Cognitive Onomasiology." In *Cognitive Approaches to Lexical Semantics*, edited by Hubert Cuyckens, René Dirven, and John R Taylor, 67–92. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Yamamoto, Mutsumi (1999). *Animacy and reference: A cognitive approach to corpus linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.